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THE HUSBAND'S SECRET





THE
HUSBAND'S SECRET

BY
RICHARD DOWLING

AUTHOR OF "UNDER ST. PAUL'S," "THE WEIRD SISTERS,"
"THE MYSTERY OF KILLARD," ETC.

In Three Volumes

VOL. II.



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LOST IN THE DARK.

Part III.—*Continued.*

AFTER THE DARK.

CHAPTER VI.

RINGING THE GREAT BLACK BELL.

WHEN William Spalding threw himself down in the boat with the one desperate hope in his mind of plugging the hole with his thumb, the boat was more than half full of water, and, to make matters worse, she plunged forward with his fall and took in water over the bows.

His feet were towards the bow, his face was towards the stern. The stern-sheet floating about


aft delayed him a second or two, and he knew he had only a few seconds to spare. The great danger now was of her heeling over. Any list would bring her gunwale under water, and then nothing could prevent her capsizing.

While with his right hand he wildly felt about for the current from the hole, with the left hand he carefully balanced the movements of his right.

At last the column of in-rushing water struck his curved palm. Then darting his hand downward he thrust his thumb into the hole. He crushed his thumb into the hole with as little attention to the agony it caused him as though it had been a piece of wood.

Now the leak was stopped. As long as he kept still there was no immediate chance of the boat going down, except that she was making water above her usual load-line, where the seams are often not staunch. However, as the boat was intended for use at sea, the chances were she was staunch up to the gunwale.


He had no superstitious fear of the dead now,



or of the ghostly whisperings in the cave. A more direct dread was upon him, and he quailed before the presence of death. Death yesterday would have had little terror for him. But to-day, after the awful crime of the night before, a crime of his own devising and invention, the thought was intolerable. No, no, he must not die. He must live on somehow until the awful newness had passed away from the deed. In ten years he might be able to face the Hereafter. If he had only one year much of the dread he now felt might be gone. Even a week would be something. But to die here, and to-day! No, no! That would never do. Anything at all was better than to follow his bleeding victims into the appalling regions of the Unknown.

If he might only be ill awhile and lose his reason before he died that would be better. He should not come upon the eternal consequences of his crime in such a sharp and affrighting manner.

What was the value of that cargo now above his head to him? He'd give every bale and barrel



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an inch more? If that were done he might manage with his left hand to drag the boat out of the cave and back to her old hiding-place. Once there he could sink her and wait until he regained strength to make the ascent from the water's edge to the downs.


This thought filled him with new energy, and the boat being now lighter than an hour ago he was able to bale more quickly. But his strength was failing, and he might with perfect safety have got out double the quantity if he had only retained the strength he possessed at starting. It would have been easy for a moderately good swimmer, even in his clothes, to cover the distance between the Black Bell and the foot of that precipitous path; but like most sailors William Spalding was unable to swim.

At length the heavy task was accomplished, and Spalding clutched the Bell with his left hand and moved the boat slowly towards the left side of the cave. He had reduced the water altogether by an inch and a half.

All this time he had been lying down on the thwarts. It was perfectly impossible for him to get into even a kneeling posture, that would have given him great relief. Shifting his body slightly to the right he got his left hand and arm over the side of the boat, and was able to use his hat as a paddle. In order that he might see where he was going it was necessary he should propel the boat stern foremost.

At moments he was on the point of giving up in despair. This paddling, although only a distance of twenty yards had to be accomplished, was terribly laborious and terribly slow, for the effect of paddling thus clumsily at one side was to make the boat go round in a circle, and this tendency had to be counteracted by, after each stroke of his left hand, holding the hat in the water, thus almost stopping the little way the stroke had imparted to the boat.

He gained the wall of the cave after a long struggle. It was easier to get on now. It was only fifty yards to the mouth of the cave, and by



laying hold of the seaweed he was enabled to pull the boat along without driving her away from the wall.

The man's determination to live, his fierce determination not to die, lent him strength and gave him power to resist cold and fatigue that would have killed him long ago under ordinary circumstances. The deadness of the arm had now extended to the shoulder and right breast, and the muscles at the back and front on the left side were beginning to creep and tingle in an alarming manner. But his will was still inflexible. He would live, though the hand of every man was against him; though the elements and fate had sworn enmity against him, he would not die.

He was now within a few yards of the cave's mouth—within a few yards of the gateway to deliverance, to escape, to life. He had wrestled with death in that odious loathsome cave, and he had thrown death and was now about to escape.

He paused awhile to gather breath.

Could it be after all that he was really to get

away? It seemed to him that he had been a century in that water-vault. Perhaps all had gone well for him on the cliffs and they had lynched his son, and Retcard was on his way out of the country, and Reynolds was dead.

He pushed the boat with extreme caution into the low mouth of the cavern, and advanced slowly outwards, until it was possible for him to see the cliffs on the opposite side of the little bay.

Here he lay awhile without motion, scarcely breathing.

He saw something that sealed his fate.

At the opposite side of the bay, with his carbine on his shoulder, a coastguardsman was walking quietly up and down! Now and then the man paused and scanned the bay closely, and looked at the path; then he resumed his walk. Owing to the gloom of the entrance, and the height of the coastguardsman, the latter could not see the smuggler.

For awhile Spalding lay fascinated by horror. All was now lost! He watched that man in a dreamy half-conscious way. The cold was

beginning to tell on his mind, and his senses were growing dull.

All at once he jerked his head up and dropped his eyes. What was disclosed to the eyes no longer interested him. The ears—the ears were now the thing! for in the silent intervals between the onslaught and the outdraught of the waves he heard the sound of——

Oars!—Oars!—Oars!

“She’ll swim a minute without the plug! One minute! It would be enough! One minute!”

With a sudden dash he drew himself upright, and stepping with feet that seemed to find the centre of gravity on the boat’s gunwale as though by instinct. Then seizing the rocks at the side of the entrance with his left hand (the right hand and arm were dead) he drew the boat swiftly along the side of the cave until once more he was opposite the great Black Bell. Then with one push, risking all on that push, he shot the sinking boat to the base of the Bell, and with a groan seized

the rope once more, and steadied himself on the gunwale.

"They're after me, but I'll never give in! Never! I'll drag the grappling home first."

He leant on the rope.

"It holds! It holds! My grappling holds!" he shouts as the perspiration pours down his face.

One second more he stands on the gunwale with the taut line straight as an iron rod in his grasp, bearing half the weight of his body now without giving an inch.

Then with a low growl of triumph he spurns the boat, hears her go down with a sough, looks back to be sure that she has sunk, and then, twisting the line round one of his legs, begins to haul himself up the slippery side with his left hand, securing himself before taking another hold by hitching up on his leg the slack of the line.

At last, after prodigious exertions, he gains the top of the Bell, and has only to ascend the shaft. He knows there is a smile of triumph on his face.

“An hour ago, after the grappling dragged the first time and I caught it the second time, I thought it was like ringing my death bell. Now I’m safe, or next thing to it. Let me shake this coil off my leg, and I’ll be up before they can pull two strokes more. I’ll be—— Ah God !”

There was a sharp, shrill, metallic rattle overhead, and something heavy fell with a loud jingle down the side of the Bell, followed by a sickening, soft, sliding noise, succeeded by a heavy splash ; after which all was still in the cave of the Black Bell.


The grappling had parted from its hold ; the passing knell of William Spalding had been rung by himself on the great Black Bell.

CHAPTER VII.

WILLIAM SPALDING'S LAST WATCH.

THE two boats commanded by Lieutenant Mathers pulled slowly and cautiously up Barnacle Bay, one boat at either side of the bay. They reached the head of the waters without finding anything. Then they crossed and recrossed the water, dropping drags as they went. Still they discovered nothing. When an hour had been spent in this profitless search they approached the cave, cocked their carbines, and rowed inward very deliberately.

The cave was as still as a cathedral at midnight. From the dark roof hung the great Black Bell, as though the least vibration, the slightest



shock, would bring it down with a stupendous swarm of noises and bury it in an abyss of shattered waters and a chaos of tumultuous foam.

A man in the bow of each boat held a lamp aloft on a boat-hook, and the boats pulled slowly round the cave. As they passed close to the walls of the cave, the men struck the red rocks with their oars to ascertain that the walls were real.

Lieutenant Mathers was completely baffled. What could have happened to the smack which had been seen in-shore last night? If the news of this smack had reached him through the story of the boy without any kind of confirmation he might have dismissed it as an invention or delusion of the boy. But that something suspicious hung on the coast last night was clearly proved by the Greenlee boat pulling out; and that a large and determined band of smugglers were concerned in the venture was conclusively established by the awful means adopted by the smugglers to prevent

the revenue boat overhauling the suspicious craft. What had happened to her? Their dragging in the Bay showed beyond doubt that she had not, as the boy had suggested, been scuttled in the Bay, for if she had the drags would have found her, whereas they swept clear over the rocky floor of the Bay. Well, there was nothing more to be done, but to leave one boat in the bay for the present and go back to Rockfall and learn any additional news that might have been gained since.

It was afternoon before Lieutenant Mathers landed at Rockfall, and reported the complete failure of his expedition. By that time the cavalcade had arrived from Greenlee, and a good deal more was known of the affair. But nothing had yet been learned from either of the wounded men, and it was known from Retcard's history of the interview he had with young Spalding the evening before, and the encounter with old Spalding on the downs in the morning, that the young man could, if he would, throw full light

on the whole affair. Vaggers, too, had been brought from Greenlee and was now at the police-station, together with Retcard, the two wounded men, and Markham Spalding's wife.

The town was in a state of feverish excitement and rage. At first, as at Greenlee, the whole weight of popular indignation had fallen on young Spalding. But as day wore on, when the people had been soothed with the good cheer of Christmas Day, they became less enthusiastic in their conviction of the young boat-builder's guilt. Until long after dark the neighbourhood of the police-office was thronged by an excited crowd, eager for news.

Later on the medical opinion of the two wounded men's cases leaked out, and to a great extent modified public feeling against young Spalding. The doctors had declared that the young man's wound had been caused by a blow from something not sharp, such as a stone or slate, and that Reynold's injuries had been inflicted by gunpowder ; the arm was burnt, the breast

was burnt, and grains of unexploded gunpowder had been found embedded in the clothes and flesh.

Then another and more conclusive fact got abroad—on Reynolds they had found a flint and steel and piece of a slow match.

Later on, when it became known that Reynolds could not live, that he was so bad the doctors would not allow him to be removed to the hospital, and that he was about to make a dying deposition, the excitement became intense.

The magistrate was seen to go in, and after an hour, it being then about nine o'clock, a policeman was despatched to the coastguard station. A crowd followed the policeman, and waited outside the station.

By this time the boat on patrol at Barnacle Bay had been relieved by the one which had returned with Lieutenant Mathers, and the men of the former boat had been dismissed from duty for the night.

A few minutes after the policeman went into the coastguard station two of the men issued

forth, and, followed by a portion of the crowd, proceeded to summon the relieved men.

By ten o'clock the relieved boat was once more under way with her full complement of men, and carrying a number of lamps and torches. Lieutenant Mathers went in command, and the boat steered west until she reached Barnacle Bay and spoke the other boat. Lieutenant Mathers, distributed lamps and torches to the other boat and the two pulled into the Black Bell Cave.

The lamps and torches were now lighted, and some of the men lashed four oars together, one after the other. Then drags were got ready, and as soon as these preparations had been made, the boats were pulled slowly round until they were at the rear of the great Bell and commanded the entrance to the upper cave, the men holding their carbines on their thighs at full cock.

Then the lieutenant called out in a loud voice hailing the upper cave, and commanding each and every one there concealed to surrender in the Queen's name.


No answer.

The summons was repeated twice, and upon receiving no reply to the third demand the men were ordered to thrust the long pole formed by the oars lashed together up into the throat of the upper cavern. The tanned sail had been lifted a little when the rope ran and the grappling-iron dashed through, but still the sail would have concealed the opening from the keenest eye unaided by extraordinary light.

The sail went upward, and the top of the long pole disappeared. Then with his sword in his teeth and a lamp in his left hand, Lieutenant Mathers ascended by the aid of the pole, which had been stepped in the mast-step of the larger boat, the boat being kept in her position by men holding on by the Bell.

In a few moments Mathers disappeared into the cave above, and found the whole place strewn with casks of brandy and bales of tobacco, the cargo of the dandy smack the *Vigil of the Moon*.

He knew that only one man was likely to be



there. He had got information from Reynolds' deposition that all the men connected with the landing of the cargo were to have been taken off early that morning. But there was no one here. He hoped to capture Spalding, but the place was deserted.

He descended, and ordered the boats to drop their drags and sweep the bottom of the cave. In a few minutes one of the drags hooked something that would not come to the surface, and that the drag could not get clear of.

"All lights here," cried the lieutenant. "Hold them aloft."

Half-a-dozen torches and half-a-dozen lamps were held arm-high by standing men. The lieutenant leaned over the stern, and shading his eyes with his hands, peered long and intently into the misty green depths disclosed by the light falling from above.

He could see only dimly, but sufficiently well to make out, guided by the intelligence he had gained before setting out from Rockfall, the dis-

masted dandy smack *Vigil of the Moon* lying at the bottom of the cave, close under the Bell Rock.

Spalding's plan had been wonderfully bold, wonderfully simple. In the Bay outside the night before they cut down the masts of the *Vigil of the Moon*, carried a warp from her into the cave, where there were three boats, exclusive of her own, and forty-five men, who made short work of hauling the smack into the cave.

Once in the cave they commenced unloading her, and with the number of men they soon accomplished that work. Then they opened holes and let her sink.

In the old time, when William Spalding was at sea he had commanded this vessel now lying three fathoms down below. She had nominally been in the fruit trade with Spain, but the value of the fruit she carried bore a very small proportion to her profits from tobacco and brandy, gin and silk. She had been the swiftest vessel of a fleet of smugglers which acted together, and were, in fact

the property of a small band of owners who shared all profits. But these facts in connection with the *Vigil of the Moon* did not come to light for many years after that awful Christmas Eve and Day.

The lieutenant cried to the men : " Hold the lights higher if you can, and pass me a drag."

The men caught hands across the boats, and, standing on the gunwales, held the lights aloft at their utmost reach.

The lieutenant seized the drag handed him by one of the men, dropped the drag very carefully into the water, and then after a moment cried : " Numbers one and two, one stroke."

The boat moved a little through the water, the drag-line tightened in his hand, trailed aft and then fell taut up and down. Mathers pulled softly on the line, and at length a clumsy bundle came in view.

" Turn him face up," said the lieutenant, " I saw him keeping his last watch on the deck below."

Thus on that Christmas night the corpse of the

plotter of the former night's crime was taken from the deck of the vessel he had sailed for years, and almost at the same moment that the greatest sin and the greatest triumph of his long wicked career had been accomplished.

CHAPTER VIII.

BEYOND THE SEAS.

THAT night Reynolds died. The portions of his deposition which are essential to the further elucidation of the mystery and the crime are as follow :

“I wish to state all I know in connection with this bad job, for I want by a full and free confession, now that I have few hours of life in me, to prepare myself as best I can for facing my Judgment in the life to come. I know most of the ins and outs of this affair from the very beginning, and through the whole piece I was William Spalding’s right-hand man.

“William Spalding found the cave, and planned

the whole thing. I don't know anything about his plans on the sea, but all his plans on the land were known to me, and I had a hand in the whole matter.

"He found a hole in the overhanging ledge at the entrance to Green Cove, and he himself put twenty pounds of gunpowder in that hole two days before Christmas Eve. Not a soul knew of that part of the plan but William Spalding and myself. First he tried to get his son to buy Captain Colville, but his son refused to have anything to do with the matter. His son did not know anything of the blast. This is as true as I am soon to meet my Maker. No one knew anything of the blast but William Spalding and me.

"Young Spalding knew that an attempt was to be made to run a cargo, but when he refused to try and buy his father-in-law, his father cast about him for some way of keeping back the revenue men, and that way was the blast.


"I was to fire that blast and get two-hundred-and-fifty pounds for my share. I fired the blast

as the revenue yawl was passing under, but either Spalding deceived me as to the length of the fuse, and it went off too soon, or in the dark I may have fired some loose powder that set off the blast too soon. I think William Spalding wished me to be killed by the blast, so that there would be no one to inform and no money to be paid to me.

"I do not know the names of any of old Spalding's accomplices on shore. He only told me as far as the landing of the cargo went, and forbade me asking questions. All the men to work the cargo out of the vessel were to come from the sea. I knew about the men coming from the sea, and that the name of the smack running the cargo was the *Vigil of the Moon*. This is all true, as I am soon to meet my Maker.

"I have been three times in gaol, once for manslaughter and twice for robbery. I own I am bad, but I was nothing for cool badness to William Spalding. He was the biggest villain I ever met.

"I belong to Portsmouth, and met William Spalding first through bringing him a secret letter




from a sea-captain in Portsmouth. Spalding allowed me a pound a-week for some months for carrying letters here and there. I used to call at post-offices for letters addressed to different names, and bring the letters to him, and then post letters for him in the different towns.

"I own I deserve my death, and a worse death, but I will do myself no good now by telling what is not true, and it is true that young Spalding had no hand in this job, nor had the man Retcard, nor the man Vaggers, nor had anyone I can name but William Spalding. All this is as true as that I am to meet my Maker to-night."

Vaggers, Retcard, and Spalding had been confronted with the dying man, and his last recorded words were that they had had nothing to do with it.

By morning Markham Spalding was much better. The doctors said there was no danger in his case, but that he must be kept quiet for a few days. His wife had been allowed to sit up with



him. She was still in the same condition of mental blankness. It was not so much that reason was deposed as that its action was suspended. She sat staring into vacancy, not even ministering to her husband, except when he asked her, and then always demanding: "Will it be soon time to go. Soon time to wake?"


Next day Markham Spalding was informed of his father's death. They thought it best he should not be told it the day before, lest the news might produce unfavourable symptoms.

As soon as he knew his father was no more he asked for a solicitor, and dictated a full statement of his knowledge of and connection with the whole affair. The appended are such extracts from that statement as will complete the history of the crime:

"Early in December, being in town, I met my late father, and he asked me to come to his house. I did so. Here he informed me that all his life he had been connected with a large and successful band of smugglers, and that having lost all his

fortune in foreign speculations, he was going to make one more venture in smuggling, and run a cargo in this neighbourhood. He further communicated to me that he had discovered an upper cave over the Black Bell Cave, and he proposed that I should bribe my father-in-law, the late Captain Colville, to wink at the affair. This I declined doing. I also declined having anything whatever to do with the affair. When we parted he was in great anger with me, and I was in despair. If I had acted honestly I should have denounced my father; but who would blame me much if I could not bring myself to do this? From the words of my father I gathered that he was determined to run the cargo, no matter whether I helped or not.

“If I did not denounce my own father the chance was that there might be blood shed, in case the revenue men got hold of the thing, and my own father might be in one boat and my wife's father in an opposing boat. This was a terrible condition. I was only a few weeks married, and



how could I look on my wife with the knowledge that my father and hers might in a short time be in deadly fight, a fight which I could prevent, but only by the sacrifice of my own father. I grew to hate my home, fear the very voice of my wife, and wish for my own death. I was distracted, mad, I think.

“On the morning of the day before Christmas I received a final request from my father to buy Captain Colville, and a promise of money for myself. The note wound up with the statement that whether I helped or not the success of the scheme was safe. At the time I did not dream of that awful affair at Lookout Head. If I had had the least hint of any such horrible design I would have denounced my father on the spot.

(Here followed the history of Christmas Eve spent in Rockfall, from which it is necessary to make only one brief extract.)

“I met my father-in-law in Rockfall, and was delighted to hear him say that he would go over to Greenlee and spend the night with us, as I

thought that would keep him out of harm, if harm there was to be. Miserably did that walk turn out. He reported himself to the men, went out in the boat, and lost his life.

“I was on the Head when the blast was fired, but I had no more knowledge such a thing was about to occur than the unfortunate men below. I do not remember much about the blast. Something struck me in the face, and I recollected nothing more until I found myself close to my own door, where I fell down insensible.

“My father told me this month the money he had given me at my marriage had been handed to me so that, should he ever have occasion to try and tamper with Captain Colville, I might be the more willing to do what he asked me in consideration of that money. If I live and regain my liberty I shall sell the business that money helped me forward in, and give the money I received for it to the widows and orphans made by that awful crime of Christmas Eve.”

Markham Spalding was tried for being an accomplice before the act, and acquitted. He sold out his business and, as he had promised, distributed the proceeds of the sale among the widows and orphans made that night, reserving only so much as served to carry himself and his wife to America. Before he left the shores of England his wife had regained the exercise of her reason, and the voyage out loosened the least faint lingering traces of mental tension. The fierce ordeal through which they had both passed drew them more closely together than could any degree of unclouded happiness, and at this day there is no happier middle-aged couple in America, no one who has a better name for boat-building than Markham Spalding along all the silver bays of the Atlantic that lie upon the American shores.

HER CHILD'S CRY

HER CHILD'S CRY.

THE story I have to tell is so very slight, the incidents are so very homely, and the people whom it concerns are so ordinary, that more than once I have taken up a pen to begin it and put down the pen again beside the virgin page. If I attempt a mere narration of fact, without adding colour or emotion, the interest of the reader is likely soon to flag, and he may probably resent finding in a publication where he expects subjective fiction in narratives, a simple and literal account of things, people, and events such as he is accustomed to meet in the columns of a newspaper.

As I have determined to go on, I hope I over-estimate the danger. And now for what I have to tell.

I live in the S.W. district of London, and when I take the train for town Loughborough Junction is the most convenient station. One dull heavy day in the October of last year I booked at Loughborough for Ludgate Hill, and took my seat in a third-class carriage of a South-Western train. It was neither for economy nor for "the pride that apes humility" that I travelled third-class; but my business obliges me to spend most of my time alone, and when I have an opportunity of getting among people, it is good for my business that I should see and hear as many of my fellow-creatures as possible. Hence I prefer the frequently-changing crowd of a third-class carriage to the thinly-masked solitude of a higher class.

On this occasion the carriage in which I found myself had only shoulder-high compartment partitions, so that one could see from end to end. There were in all seven or eight persons present,

and I was in the last compartment but one, with my back to the engine, and in the right-hand corner.

For a few minutes I engaged myself in observing the five or six people scattered up and down, the major portion, in front of me. Then, looking over my shoulder, I found that the compartment nearest to the engine contained only a woman with a young baby in her arms. She was sitting with her back to mine. Owing to the violence of the wrench I had to give my neck in order to see her, my glance was brief; but while it lasted I caught sight of an expression such as I had never before seen on a human face, an expression which so affected my curiosity and wonder that, after allowing a little time to elapse, and just as we reached Walworth Road, I shifted myself to the other end of the seat on which I had been sitting, and, throwing my arm carelessly over the partition, looked long at the pair. In the sense that a surprising revelation may fascinate anyone, I was fascinated.

There was no need to fear my long stare might disturb the woman. I knew by the way the woman held the baby that it was asleep. I could not see the face of the child. The mother held it close to her bosom and bent her own head low over it. Although I could hear no word of hers, even when the train stopped, her lips moved slowly, paused awhile, and then went over again the very same phrases. At length I learned the unspoken words of the passion-weary lips :

“My darling! My baby son! My own!
My own!”

Mother's ordinary words, but to what an unutterable accompaniment of pose and look!

Without being deformed or hideous, she was without exception the ugliest woman I ever saw. There was nothing loathsome, repulsive, or malignant in her face, but it was completely ugly. The skin was dark and coarse in texture. The forehead was ragged at the temples, the hair at the right-hand side of the parting grew an inch lower down than at the other, and the upper por-

tion of the forehead projected at the line of the hair. The nose was thin at the point, upturned, splay where it met the face, sharply sunken where it joined the forehead at the bridge, and small for the other features. The cheeks were heavy and livid, differing in colour from the rest of the face only by having a few blotches. The mouth was large, with prominent thick lips that never closed neatly, and that always remained heavily apart and leaning outward when motionless. The chin was long and feeble. I did not see the eyes ; they never for one moment were removed from the sleeping infant.

“My darling! My baby son! My own!
My own!”

Did ever any other heart yearn so overwhelmingly over any other being! Was this a new manner, a higher, more intense form of maternal love? And had all else of that kind which I had seen been only the prelude to this imperial theme of passion?

Although the chin was weak, the expression

of the whole face indicated strength, but strength irregular, and of uncertain action. The eyes might hold the key to the whole face.

“My darling! My baby son! My own! My own!”

Those words, beyond all doubt, were the clue to her whole nature. That child, beyond all doubt, was the acme of her present life. She was as unconscious of the presence of any strangers as though she sat alone with her child under a palm-tree in the oasis of an ocean of sand.

“Ludgate Hill! Ludgate Hill!”

The train stopped and I got up. She, too, rose with a shudder.

“My darling! My baby son! My own! My own!”

I left the carriage, and in doing so noticed that she had some difficulty in opening the door. I turned the handle for her, and assisted her to alight. She looked up :

“Thank you, sir.”

Deep-set blue-gray eyes, with strange red points of fire in them, like sparks of glowing charcoal seen through damp glass.

Her left hand and arm swathed the baby to her bosom. The hand lay visible and bare; on the third finger was a wedding-ring.

Who had wooed and won this woman, whose sheer uncomeliness would be enough to shame all tender words, turn awry all tender glances? And how was it that she whose appearance scouted the thought that any man could seek love of her for her appearance had nevertheless reached the crown of woman's dreams, motherhood, and yet had room for nothing in her heart but the one cry :

"My darling! My own!"

She was not a widow. The child could have been no more than a few months old, and she wore no widow's weeds. And yet he whose coming with words of endearment must have been an apocalypse of delight had already faded into nothing, passed out of her heart, leaving no trace of his image behind, not even in the face of the

child, for her eyes did not seek behind the baby for his likeness. It was only

“My own! My own!”

I confess that all the day I was haunted by the face of this woman. I could not get it out of my mind. When I read, it came between my eyes and the page. In the street I found myself looking for it among the crowd. I kept saying to myself the words indicated by the lips but never breathed by the voice.

I was detained in town until a late hour. In the evening I met a friend, Dr. Robert William Baird of Brixton. I invited him to supper, and we turned into a restaurant in the Strand.

After supper we lit cigars. I thought I noticed a look of painful preoccupation on his face. “Has anything unpleasant happened?” I asked; “you seem out of sorts.”

He shook himself, smiled, and roused up. “Oh dear no; nothing the matter. I did not know I was looking blue. To tell you the truth, I was thinking of a very unpleasant scene that

I witnessed to-day. You know Langton the solicitor?"

"No."

"Michael Seymour Langton, you know?"

"His name, no more."

"A good fellow. A great friend of mine; you must know him some day. Well, I looked in at his office to-day. He's always up to his eyes in work; but unless he has a client with him, he's always glad to see a friend. One of those free-and-easy, good-hearted fellows, who, without making you feel a bit uncomfortable, will tell you to be off the moment he wants you to go, so that you need never be afraid of doing him grievous bodily harm by staying awhile if he'll let you."

"Well?"

"Exactly. But I can't help telling you about him, he's such a capital fellow. You and he shall dine with me next Sunday. Eh?"

"All right as far as I am concerned; but about the incident or scene?"

"Quite so. 'Sit down,' he said, 'sit down, old

man.' Then looking at his watch, he said : 'If you've got five or ten minutes to spare, I'll show you the most perfect development of the genus scoundrel that I ever met.'

"I had the five minutes to spare, and moreover I always am open to make a sacrifice if by so doing I can get a glimpse at anything superlatively good or bad ; my liking for you, to illustrate what I say, arises from your superlative badness."

"All right, Baird ; but for goodness' sake go on," said I—a little petulantly, I fear, for I was not in a very jocular humour, and the exuberant garrulity of the good little doctor jarred against my nerves.


"My dear fellow, you know my motto, 'Slow and sure.' You can never get the real flavour out of a story or port by gulping it down. Taste it curiously, and you fill your whole body from your forehead to your feet with delight, especially in the case of port—when it's good."

I expostulated only by a sigh. I knew him

thoroughly. Had I expostulated in words he would have broken out into further digression.

"Well," he resumed, after a few solemn puffs at his cigar, "I waited. 'Now,' said Langton. A knock sounded at the door, and a man entered. At first I thought Langton had made a false diagnosis of his visitor, for anything less scoundrelly than the appearance of the man I never saw. He was of the medium height, well made, handsome, with light-blue eyes, straight nose, straight mouth, clear complexion, and a most winning and disarming smile. He appeared to be about thirty-eight years of age. His moustache and whiskers were brown, and the well-shaven chin was very firm and clean in outline. Upon the whole an exceedingly proper man, and one, I thought, likely to be very popular among the ladies ; in no way like you, my dear Melton.

"Well, he came into the room with a bow and a smile, holding his hat across his waistcoat in a most genteel, humble, and conciliatory manner—thus. For a moment he seemed in doubt as to



whether he and Langton were to shake hands or not ; and, to tell you the truth, I thought it both rude and painful for Langton to thrust his hands so emphatically into his trousers' pockets and straddle over the hearthrug.

“ ‘Mr. Langton,’ said the stranger, in a very soft and winning voice, ‘I have come, as you know, on my wife’s and my own business. You remember me? I am Antony Ryland.’

“ ‘Be assured I remember *you*,’ answered Langton, in a most impolite tone, and with a most scandalously unprofessional emphasis on the word *you*. Why, that much impolite emphasis on a pronoun in the second person would ruin a first-class medical practice, I tell you. We have strychnine and prussic-acid in the pharmacopœia, but impolite emphasis is a thing unknown to the faculty,” said Baird, drawing down his waistcoat slowly with his left hand, and solemnly raising his glass with his right, keeping his cigar between the fingers of his left hand the while, and looking into my face with malicious deliberateness.

"For goodness' sake go on, Baird ; and drop your hideous attempts at humour !"

"Impetuous youth," he apostrophised me, "of forty, do we not dilute all good things with something useless or stupid, to wit, whisky with water, laudanum with aqua, life with sleeping——?"

"Health with medicine, and hope with Baird," I cried. "But do go on."

He paused a moment, then spilt a few drops from his glass, held it out from him, and said in a tone of suppressed enthusiasm : "I pour and drink to Walter Melton's precocious smartness. Bless the antique boy !"

"Waiter, two more."

"And to his noble hospitality," cried the little man, with a mischievous twinkle, as he emptied his glass.

"Well," resumed Baird, with a sigh, as though the duty of narration pressed heavily upon him, "Langton increased the base of the isosceles triangle his legs made with the hearthrug and said : 'You have come for the purpose of meeting

your wife, and trying to induce her to make over on you money which otherwise will go to that child. Is not that so?’

“I thought Langton’s manner simply brutal.

“‘Sir,’ said Ryland, glancing from Langton to me, ‘we are not alone.’ He did not show the least sign of haste or temper, but smiled as gently as though I were his sweetheart, and he were asking me to withdraw in order that papa and he might talk over the business aspect of his successful love-suit.

“I rose to go, but Langton turned sharply upon me and said : ‘Neither I nor my client has sought this interview, neither I nor my client desires secrecy. If it does not answer the purpose of this man that you should be present, he can go. I desire, Baird, that you remain.’

“By George, Melton, but I thought there would be blood. Langton’s voice was full of threat and command ; sit down I must and did.

“At that moment the door opened, and a woman carrying a baby in her arms came in.

Indeed, she was one of the plainest woman I ever saw. She wore a hideous cold green plaid shawl and an old yellow straw bonnet trimmed with faded violet ribbons."

"Eh?"

"Cold green plaid shawl, old yellow straw bonnet with faded blue or violet ribbons. Why did you stop me?"

"Was her complexion bad and her nose sunken much below the forehead at the bridge?"

"Yes; at least I think so. Give me a moment. It was."

"And she held the child to her bosom as though it were part of her own body that felt cold and needed all the heat of her arms and her bosom?"

"All fond mothers hold their babies so. Do you know her?"

"Was the hair on her forehead irregular? Did it grow lower, much lower, at one side than at the other?"

"Yes, it did. Did you ever meet her?"

"She was in the carriage I came by to-day. Go on."

"When the woman saw Ryland, she shuddered and drew the child closer to her. I was watching every movement and look most closely. Langton went to her, spoke to her, and taking her by the hand led her to a seat with as much gallantry and deference as though she were the finest woman and the first lady in London. Ryland stood in the middle of the room with one hand on the back of a chair, and the other still holding his hat in front of his waistcoat. He bowed and smiled faintly as she crossed the room; beyond that, he did not move. After the first look she never glanced towards him again during the whole interview.

"A few words were spoken by Langton in a low voice to the woman, to which she made no reply, he sat down at his writing-table and said aloud :

"Mrs. Ryland, of the money you inherited from your great-uncle from Jamaica four months after your marriage you have already assigned


away to this man half, or about two thousand five hundred pounds, on the condition that he was to keep away from you for ever. This money having been left to your private use in such a manner that he could have no claim whatever on a penny of it, although he is your—husband—you, against my advice, made over to him the moiety of that fortune. He has been gambling again, and it is all gone——’

“‘Operating on the Stock Exchange,’ put in Ryland, in a soft voice, as though more desirous to keep statements accurate than to shield or excuse himself.

“‘One-half of your fortune has been gambled away, and this—man now wishes to have the opportunity of dissipating——’

“‘Of operating with——’ broke in Ryland.

“‘Of dissipating more of it. Your decision—a decision which has my full concurrence—is that you retain the money for yourself and your child, and that if he give any further trouble you seek a divorce on the ground of cruelty.’



“‘But I shall get back all I have lost if I can command only another thousand—only a thousand. There will still be some left for her and the boy, and I shall win all back.’

“‘Not with my approval one penny,’ said Langton hotly.

“‘But I have right—I am her husband.’

“‘We won’t discuss law with you. Mrs. Ryland declines to give you the money. The law is open to all. You can appeal to it if you please. That is your answer. You may leave now.’

“‘But I too want to secure something for our son,’ said Ryland. His face was now deadly pale, and I saw his fingers tighten and whiten on the brim of his hat until the brim was crushed flat against the side. The pleasant smiles were all gone, and a deadly sinister leer covered his handsome features. His blue eyes were glassy and cold, and his lips fell back from his white teeth like a coward’s at bay.

“‘Out at once!’ cried Langton, springing to his feet angrily, and I do believe he would have

used violence had not Ryland hastily withdrawn, closing the door very softly after himself.

"There was a long silence. Langton remained standing by his table, the woman sat bending over her child and holding it against her with both her arms and both her thin hands, the fingers outspread that the protecting and cherishing hand might touch the most of the loved surface.

"After awhile Langton went across the room and stood over her like a sentinel lion. Then he said in a low kind voice, that made me think more of him than ever I had thought before: 'Did the little fellow feel the cold?'

"'I tried not to let him,' she answered, looking up for a moment. 'I am always afraid to leave him behind, my baby son. I am afraid *he*,' looking fearfully at the door, 'might come and steal him away from me. My own! my own!'

"She bent and absolutely gloated over the little pale sleeper, until a queer kind of dead pain came into my heart.

"'There is no fear of his doing that,' said

Langton. 'It is the child's money he wants, and not the boy himself.'

"She rose to go. Langton conducted her to the door as though he were the first gentleman in England, she the finest woman in London, the first lady in the land. 'Good-day,' said he. 'Good-day,' said she, and she was gone.

"Langton came back and stood looking gloomily into the fire. 'What a scoundrel!' he cried; 'what an arrant scoundrel! what an unapproachable scoundrel!' He drove his heel into the coal and repeated the words.

" 'Tell me about it,' said I.

" 'Easily enough,' he answered. 'He was a clerk in a stock-broker's office two years ago, and she earned just enough to live on in some umbrella manufactory. Her people had been comfortable once, but lost all they had at her father's death; and two years ago, as far as she knew, she was the only survivor of her family. She was then about nine-and-twenty years of age and very plain-looking, so that I daresay she had no hope of ever


marrying. She lodged in some place off Stamford Street, Blackfriars Road, and her nearest friend was her landlady, to whom she paid three-and-sixpence a-week for her attic. Two years ago this Ryland came to lodge in the same house. He was "the gentleman" of the place, and rented two rooms on the first-floor; dingy and dismal as the street was, the rooms were large and, owing to the locality, cheap. From the very first he began paying attentions to this woman, and in the end he made downright love to her.

"'You may fancy how this poor creature, no longer young, who had never been anything but ugly, felt flattered by the honourable approaches of "the gentleman on the first-floor." Well, to cut it short, in a few months they were married; she, in the full belief that he loved her for some subtle charm of mind which he told her he had discovered—he was too consummate a liar to say he loved her for her looks; and he, in the full consciousness that she had been left, a year before, about five thousand pounds, by a great-uncle who

died after coming home from Jamaica, and of whom she had heard little or nothing all her life. The money had been devised to her father and his heirs absolutely, and had been advertised. Thus he got the scent of it and hunted her down.

“Sharp as he was, he counted without the law. He thought that things were still, with regard to married women's property, as they had been long ago when the husband could say to the wife: “What's yours is mine; what's mine is my own.” He showed his hand too soon. After a week he grew careless of her. This nearly broke her heart. In a month he told her about the legacy, and steps were taken to realise. Seeing how the thing was now, the landlady penetrated the whole design. The good woman's husband brought Mrs. Ryland privately to me. When he found this out, he turned from indifference to threats, and from threats to the most atrocious and inhuman cruelty. To sum up, we proved the will, got the money, and I invested it in Stock. By this time I found out that he owed large sums

of money; he had been speculating through another, and had got heavily let in. He continued his bad treatment of her, and at last, just when her baby was about to be born, we gave him two thousand five hundred pounds to take himself off and leave her in peace. All I could do would not induce her to have a legal separation. She seemed to think that such a step might in some way, goodness knew how, injure the future status of her unborn child. I may tell you that for a whole month I resisted giving him the money unless I obtained from him something more binding than a written undertaking not to go near her or molest her in any way. I did not consent until I saw that to hold out any longer would be to imperil her life. Of course the undertaking given by him has no more legal value than the ashes in that grate. Her whole soul, her whole nature, now seems centred in that child. When she had made up her mind that no man would ever woo her, he came. He was above her station at the time, handsome as you




saw, accomplished as I know, and fascinating as you may have guessed. He became her sweetheart, and she knelt down and worshipped him. He became her husband and he spurned her as she knelt. He told her he thought less of her than of the lowest of her sex, and she drew back from him after an iliad of inhuman abuse and violence: her one only dream of life gone for ever, the world a vile waste of dead hopes that festered in a sickly sun. She would have worked for him, given him her heart's blood; but he told her he did not want her presence, and that he loathed the very street she lived in. He derided her folly for ever supposing that any man such as *he* could dream of enduring the presence of such a frightful caricature of nature as *she*. He heaped every insult and contumely upon her, but he did not break her down; for, Baird, she knew she was soon to be a mother. *He* might leave her, and did leave her, but the baby came; in the winter of her life, in her worse than widowhood, the baby-boy came.

She had given money to the husband to go away, but the baby had come instead, and lay in her arms all day and all night, sweet for her kisses, sweet for all her love, the companion of her worse than widowhood, the unconscious confidant of all her sorrows, the antidote which, when pressed against her bosom, healed her of her memories——'

"‘Get me back my child ; or kill me—here !’

"I sprang up and turned round. The woman was standing in the doorway. Both her arms were stretched out towards Langton. Her eyes were staring and fixed, addressed to him mechanically, but not looking at him. She was rigid as a statue, and at each corner of her mouth appeared foam. Langton had turned round, but did not approach her. We were both petrified with fear and surprise.


"‘Get me back my child ; or kill me—here !’ she repeated in the same tone as before, a tone that made us shudder. There was no passion in it ; no anger, no entreaty, no command. It



seemed as though her heart had died and her lips were mechanically repeating its dying wish without owning any human sympathy for the dead heart.

"Still she stood rigid in the doorway. Langton looked at me in consternation, and whispered: 'This case is now one for you not me. Go to her and speak to her.'

"I approached her and took one of the outstretched hands. It was damp and cold. As I led her into the room, I slipped my finger on her wrist and looked into her eyes. The pulse was low and weak; I had expected to find it high and strong. The semi-transparent ruby-coloured flaws in the eyes had dilated and gathered deeper fire; the expression was one of intense subjective occupation. Perhaps I may better convey my meaning by saying that it seemed as if she were dealing rather with the formula for an idea than with the idea itself. At a rough guess I said to myself: 'A shock has numbed the perceptive power of the faculty, but



has left uninjured the power of pain. She has the sickening sense of want, and the formula for her loss, but she does not acutely appreciate her loss as one who contrasts bitterly the memory of possession past with the realisation of present dereliction. She has no well-defined notion of what her child or death is, but she knows she wants either; that less than either will not quiet the unusual clamourings in her heart.'


"Death or her child, it was all one to her; the peace that was gone with her baby, or the peace that was to come—in the grave. 'A bad case,' I thought to myself; 'the child and the image of the child are gone; this always means insanity. This woman will be numbed as she is now, until either the child is returned to her arms or the image to her mind.'

"How did this happen?' I asked of her in as gentle a voice as I could.

"He waited for me outside. He took the child from me—I did not let it go until it cried—until it cried—until I knew He

hurt it. Well, it cried and I let it go. There were people around, and I asked a policeman to get me back my child. But He said He was my husband, and that the child was His. The policeman asked me: Was He my husband, and was the child His? and I answered: Yes. The policeman shook his head and walked away. Then He got into a cab and drove off—do you understand what I say? He got into a cab and drove away with my child in His arms—you find it hard to understand? I don't, for I felt Him do it. I felt it here in my breast, where my child used to lie asleep—I felt the child drawn out of my breast—and—sir, while He drove away, as there's a God above me, my child cried—as he drove away—drove away. You find it hard to understand, sir; but my child cried as he drove away—drove away.'

"I dropped her hand, and, having left her, whispered to Langton: 'Is there any means of compelling that scoundrel to give up the child at once?'



"He shook his head and muttered a malediction.

"‘Then,’ said I, ‘you had better send her home *in charge of someone.*’

"‘You don’t think she’ll do violence upon herself?’ he whispered.

"‘No. But someone should be always with her until the crisis arrives.’

"‘What do you expect to follow the crisis?’

"‘She will either be cured or grow violent.’

"‘My dear Baird, I can’t leave here just now. Would you see her home, tell her landlady to get someone to look after her, see her own doctor, and ask them to send all bills to me?’

"I had nothing very particular on hand; so I did as he requested. We got a sober, honest, elderly woman I knew to look after her. I found out her doctor, and we had a chat about her; he promised to take particular care of her, and to let me know from time to time how the case went on. As soon as I had made all as comfortable as I could, I came back to town and

called upon Langton, knowing he would like to hear how I had got on.

"When I arrived at Langton's outer office, the clerk beckoned to me and said : ' Our client's husband is inside again.'

"Without stopping to knock, I turned the handle and went in. Ryland's back was towards me, and Langton, as formerly, stood on the hearth-rug. This time, however, there was no straddle. He stood upright with his feet and his lips close together. He was deadly pale, and, I could see at a glance, in a deadly rage. Ryland was speaking as I entered ; he bowed with great politeness to me, paused, and then resumed :

" ' As I was saying, Mr. Langton, the boy is now in safety, quite as safe as if he were with his mother, and I have come to say that I am prepared to answer for his safety until the money, twelve hundred pounds, is paid over to me.'

" ' So,' said Langton, with a great effort to control his rage, ' you propose charging an additional two hundred pounds upon the estate

for the success of your last infamous trick, you sorry swindler !'

" 'As a lawyer, you ought to know that your language is illegal and——'

" 'Take an action ; do !' cried Langton, now losing all power over his anger. 'Take an action, and go into any court you please, and I pledge you my word as a man and a lawyer that there isn't a jury in England but would lynch you, and not a judge on the bench but would applaud them ; and, by heavens ! if you don't get out of this instantly, I'll not leave the job for judge or jury, but do it with my own hands.'

"He seemed about to spring on the man. Ryland slipped his hand behind him, backed towards the door, and said : 'Don't come near me, Mr. Langton. Well knowing the violence of your temper, I was compelled to be a little un-English, and come—armed.'

" 'Un-English !' shouted Langton, striding over to him. 'There's nothing human, not to say English, in your corrupt carcass. Get out, man,

or they will be hanging you for killing me, or putting up a statue to me for having killed you. Get out! They pay for killing venomous reptiles in India, why not in England too? Get out, man, I say, or I shall be claiming blood-money before night.'

"With the revolver held across his waistcoat and pointed at nothing in particular, Ryland backed out of the door, and was gone."

So far as there was anything of moment connected with this affair, I heard nothing more from Baird that night.

I did not see Baird again till the week after Christmas. He then continued the history as follows :

"For some weeks after those scenes in Langton's office they heard no more of Ryland. During that time his unhappy wife continued in the same mental lethargy, repeatedly asking for her baby, but betraying no emotion and giving no

sign of violence. I looked in at her lodgings about twice a-week. Her doctor, Dr. Sherwood Freeman, and I agreed as to the case. There was little or no hope of a mental rally until either the child was restored or her mind received some shock which should counteract the one occasioned by its loss. In the meantime Langton had, as soon as possible, instituted legal proceedings against Ryland. I don't know what the nature of those proceedings was, but he held out slight hope of speedy relief; the case, it seems, was one full of difficulties at best, and the block in the courts filled him with despair.

"In about six weeks from the day I was in Langton's office, Ryland wrote to say the child was ill, and that he would deliver it up on condition of getting a thousand pounds.

"‘Ah!’ said Langton to me the evening he got the letter, ‘so the threats of law have already beaten him down two hundred. The illness is a lie to force us to terms. I shall not answer that letter.’

"Well, Melton, as you may guess, I was by this time greatly interested in the cases, legal and medical. In a week I called again upon Langton, and, to my astonishment, found Mrs. Ryland there.

"The explanation was very simple. The child had really been ill of scarlet fever, all possible care had been taken of it, but nevertheless it had died, and was to be buried that day; and Langton and the vacant-eyed woman were setting off now to the cemetery.

"Ryland would not allow the mother to approach her dying child, but when it was dead he seemed to think he might run some ugly risk if he did not permit the mother's attendance at the interment, and thither Langton and she were now going. I examined her closely, but could observe no change; the channels of her reason were frozen up, and in precisely the same condition as on the day of her bereavement.

" 'May I go?' I asked.

" 'Certainly,' said he; and in a little while

the three of us got into a cab and drove to the cemetery Ryland had named.

"The same unbroken shadow of mental gloom hung over the unhappy woman. During the whole drive she never spoke a word. Her eyes were cast down most of the time. On the few occasions when she lifted them they sought Langton's face, but there was no question, no excitement in them. It was plain from their appearance that reason was an exile, but the land reason had left behind remained still unoccupied by anything save the spirit of the void.

"When we got inside the gates of the cemetery we ascertained that the body of the child had not yet arrived.

"Langton turned to me and asked : 'What do you think will be the result of to-day ?'

" 'I think,' I answered, 'that it will bring about the crisis, followed by perfect sanity or violent insanity ; but there is no telling which.'

"After awhile a mourning coach drove in. I will not drag you through all the small events of

the interment. It will be sufficient for you to know that the father of the child was not present, and that during the whole time it occupied she never altered in the least.

"I felt greatly disappointed. I had been confident of the lifting or development of the affection now paralysing her brain.

"When it was all over we returned to the cab as sober as could be. I had been greatly deceived, and I could see that Langton's last hope was gone.

"When we had got about halfway back she suddenly looked up into Langton's face, and said :

" 'We have left something behind us.'

"Langton and I looked round the cab. The three umbrellas were all right.

" 'No,' answered Langton, 'I don't think we have left anything behind.'

" 'In the cemetery ?' she asked.

" 'No,' I said. 'No.'


" 'We have,' she said. 'I know it, I feel it. As we drove away I heard my child cry. As

we drove away now I heard my child cry. Ah gentlemen, let us go back and take my child up out of the wet grave. If you give him to me and let me hold him against my breast he will get warm. Ah gentlemen, let us go back for my darling! My baby son! My own! My own!’

“She threw her arms out towards us with the anguish of a mother’s broken heart on her face, and the knowledge of her childless fate in her eyes. Then all at once her body began swaying slightly, and with a low moan she buried her face in her hands and burst into tears.

“She had lost her child, but had regained his image, and her brain was healed. She had lost her child and regained his image, and her heart was broken. The mad live long and howl about our paths; the broken-hearted creep quietly into the shadows and silently dig their own graves, and in a little while crawl into the earth with gentle sighs and gentler smiles.

“There is now no heat in her poor breast



to warm her poor babe. She has been dead a week.

“Four days ago I saw Ryland buying gloves—dark green gloves, a very quiet colour—in the Strand. He was looking very well. God bless me, Melton, but sometimes this world is too much for me! Do you ever feel something in the world is too much for you?”


MISS GAY





MISS GAY.

ONE of the quietest places in the London suburbs is Manville Square, Clapham. It lies at the core of a network of shady lanes and sequestered roads, where the thrush and blackbird sing in the quiet evening. When the wind is from the west you can hear Big Ben strike noon. The place is gathered into a peaceful calm; and to find yourself in Manville Square, after the dust and turmoil of the City, is as great a change as for the citizen of a sleepy cathedral town to find himself on a prairie with the feeling of inexhaustible relief always arising from the absence of walls. But in Manville Square you meet no




solitude. Lightly-swung broughams and landaus and victorias brush over the smooth roadway now and then; you can on no fine day put your head out of a front window without hearing the laughter of rosy-cheeked children and the patter of tiny feet. You will see a handsome housemaid, hand on hip, holding an area-gate and talking to the baker. In the enclosure you will see an old maid reading a new novel, and hear a governess asked the French for a doll's four-wheeled perambulator. You will hear a prosperous-looking man hail from his window a passing neighbour, and discuss in five sentences the contents of the morning papers. You will see a buxom young matron leave her home alone, with eyes cast down in thought, divided between the two young sleepers in the large top room and the necessity for getting a pair of boots for the boy who has just worn out his first pair, and something for "father" to eat when he comes home from the City.

Here the sunlight seemed always to come

early and stay late. Summer loved the place, and lingered longer here than even at Kew. The square had no pretensions to splendour or wealth, or fashion or distinction. The houses were modern, well-built, wholesome, and roomy. The grass and shrubs in the enclosure were kept neatly and efficiently, but there was no such prudery in the gardening as forbade cricket to four-year-old boys or the laughing scamper of children through the trees. It was the place to turn into when you were gloomy or sour. If you walked there with the vilest temper, you could not hold your evil humour half-an-hour; for you would meet some fair grave-faced maiden of fourteen, with music under her arm, walking circumspectly to her lesson, the picture of purity, or some hot-faced sailor-lad of seven rolling a hoop, the picture of eternal health and youth and vigour. You could not keep up your rancour in the face of such protests against the spleen as you would there find. The genii of the place were peace and prosperous plenty and courteous

services. No angry word ever invaded that Tempe of London. No dun ever cast a shadow on its clean flagway or wholesome grass.

The houses all belonged to one landlord, who was a rich man and owned property in several other parts of London. He had made one rule over all his house-property, and that was to take ten per cent. a-year less for his houses than he could easily get, and to be much more particular as to the people he accepted as tenants than most landlords. It was not enough to satisfy him that the tenant was solvent and respectable; he would also be convinced that the applicant for a house of his was free from anything which could make him a disagreeable neighbour. Hence Manville Square partook of the nature of a huge club, and the people of it who knew one another got on very well together. In all the agreements upon which houses had been taken in Manville Square, one of the most stringent clauses was against any form whatever of sub-letting. Those who took houses were to be clearly informed that one of the



advantages of the place was that there were to be no lodgers in Manville Square.

When Dr. Stephen Brooks took his house he read the clause with satisfaction. If a man paid a hundred-and-thirty pounds a-year for a house in the suburbs, he expected not to have lodgers next door. Mrs. Brooks was delighted at the stringency of this condition. They had had a hard fight in the world. They were childless. Neither was now young, and a little respectability becomes very acceptable in the middle life of woman, when youth has been spent in narrow ways.

For ten years Dr. Brooks and his wife lived a quiet easy life in the square; and then, when he was sixty and she fifty-five, he died. He had saved a little money—not much. As soon as all debts and expenses had been paid there was no more than fifteen hundred pounds for the widow. Her friends recommended her to give up this house at once, sell off what furniture she would not absolutely need, and take a small house out farther.

She wrote to the landlord, and he replied, saying he would be most happy to do anything he could for her. He recommended her to do nothing definite for a day or two, until he had called.

Between the despatch of that letter and the visit to Mrs. Brooks the landlord was observed to call at every house in the square. When he saw the widow he was extremely polite and considerate. He hoped she would not deem it impertinent on his part if he alluded to her affairs. He could not help hearing people speaking of her, for she and her husband had been the most popular residents in the square. Among things he heard the cause of her wishing to give up the house was, that her circumstances had naturally been reduced by her husband's death. He had ventured to come with a suggestion, which, if she did not feel disposed to adopt, she would, he felt sure, take as well meant. All the people in the square were most anxious she should not leave it, and would do everything in their power to help her. He too should be loath

to lose an old and valued resident. Now, what he came prepared to do was to cancel the sub-letting clause of her lease.

Thus it arose in the year 1879, in one house in Manville Square, lodgings could be secured, and that Edwin Colthurst lived as a lodger with Mrs. Brooks. He occupied a room at the top of the house, looking on the square. He went into the City every day immediately after breakfast, and was not home till near six in the evening. He was quiet and unassuming, spoke in a soft low voice, and never was so pleased as when he could steal in and out unperceived. He had no companions or friends. He lived altogether to himself. No one ever called upon him. He always came home straight from his business and went to his room. At nine o'clock he came down and ate some supper, mostly in silence. Mrs. Brooks had a great liking for the young man, and often said she wished he would have some of his friends with him on Sunday. But he always made the same

answer: "Thank you, Mrs. Brooks. It is very good of you to think of it. But there is no one I care to ask just now."

He had a taste for entomology and reading, and he spent all his Sunday evenings over his books or his cases of specimens. Towards the end of May, Mrs. Brooks thought he was looking very ill, and attributed this to the want of variety in his life and, she feared, his great carelessness about meals. Often at supper it slipped from him that he had eaten nothing since breakfast that morning. Mrs. Brooks made up her mind she would see he ate his supper at all events; so towards the end of May she was always in the dining-room when that meal was served for him.

Early in June, while he was in the dining-room, Mrs. Brooks pulled a letter out of her pocket and said:

"Mr. Colthurst, I got a letter from a lady this morning. She has been recommended to come to me by a lady who stopped here—by a lady who was with me for a few months last year. I want

to answer the letter at once, and I cannot read part of it or the signature. Will you be so kind as to try if you can make it out?"

"Certainly. Let me see it."

He took it, and after looking at it awhile, read out :


"DEAR MADAM,

"My friend, Mrs. Shipstone, tells me I should be lucky if you will allow me to come and stay with you for a fortnight or three weeks—business takes me to London. My niece accompanies me. We shall need two bedrooms, opening into one another, and a private sitting-room. We come up to see a doctor. You need not be alarmed. The complaint is neither infectious nor dangerous. An early reply will oblige,

"Yours faithfully,

"HELEN GAY."

When Colthurst had finished his supper, he bade Mrs. Brooks good-night and went to bed.



Five nights after that Miss Gay—she proved to be a spinster—arrived with her niece.

“You remember,” said Mrs. Brooks that night to Colthurst, as he ate his supper, “the letter I showed you a few days ago from a lady recommended to me by Mrs. Shipstone?”

“Yes. The writing was not very legible.”

“That is it. Well, they came this morning. I don’t wonder at her coming up to town for advice. I don’t think she has many weeks’ life in her. She’s bent on one side, as thin as charity, and quite yellow and pinched. I don’t think she came a day too soon, poor old lady. She isn’t very old—nothing like as old as I—but death is in her face—death is in her face.”


“I am very sorry for the poor lady,” said Colthurst seriously.

He had a sympathetic nature and a serious manner.

“But her niece, Mr. Colthurst, her niece! I don’t think I ever saw any one more lovely. She is fair and slight, and tall and graceful, the picture

of health, and no more than eighteen. A most perfect lady. A lady in her carriage, her speech, her smile. They are, I believe, of very good family ; but young Miss Gay would do credit to the best house in London. She is soft-mannered and cheerful. I cannot tell you how much I was struck by her. She is the loveliest creature I ever saw in all my life, and so amiable. To see her keep smiling all the time to cheer her poor ailing aunt would win anyone's love, man or woman, old or young. I have seen her only twice, and then for no more than a few minutes at a time ; but never any one else grew on me in so short a space."

Next evening, as Colthurst was coming home, he met an elderly lady and a tall slight girl walking slowly towards Mrs. Brooks's. He made up his mind at once that these were the new lodgers, drew back, and saw them enter the house. This was complete confirmation. He did not go into the house then, but walked round the square three or four times. It was such a pleasant thing to



think he could go up to that door at any moment, open it with his latch-key, and walk in. All at once he thought : "Suppose the house should take fire ; there is no one there to look after the—women."

It was a lovely moonlight night. He opened his window after supper, and sat long looking out at the quiet white square and the cool alleys of shade under the trees in the enclosure.

When he went to bed he had a dream. The Thames rose and rose all an afternoon until it came up Clapham Road, and the people were in terror, and feared to fly lest the waters should overwhelm them. They all climbed to the tops of their houses, and there sat awaiting destruction or deliverance. Mrs. Brooks and the servants and the elderly maiden lady and he had got out on the roof and watched the turbid tide swirling by.

At length a great outcry arose on the top of the house, and it was found that young Miss, the lovely young Miss Gay, had been left below. He tore off his coat, and, descending the staircase, swam

through room after room, but could find no trace of her. The flood was most peculiar, for although each floor was flooded no floor was quite full, so that he could swim through every room in the house. At last he came to the front-door. He opened it. All the flood had disappeared. There was the sunshine dancing all over the square, and in the core of the sunshine a landau, and from the landau alighting a young, tall, lovely girl, Miss Gay. He went to assist her, and she said : "What have you done with your coat, Edwin?" And then he remembered—fool he had been to forget !—that she was his wife ; that he had married her just three months ago ; and that when they got into the drawing-room he would take her in his arms and kiss her a thousand times ; kiss her hand, her forehead, her cheek, her neck, her lips, a thousand times. When should he tire of kissing his beautiful bride ? Oh, never, never, never !

When he awoke next morning the birds in the square were singing, the sun shone out valiantly, all looked gay and young. As far as the square

was concerned, old Earth looked only in its teens. The clean handsome housemaid was standing at the area-gate, taking, on behalf of the cook, the bread from the strong wholesome-looking baker. No children were abroad yet, but a nursery window opposite was open, and he could hear the words of the children as they were dressed, and subsequently said their prayers in loud unfearing voices.

That morning he met no one before leaving the house but the servant who gave him his breakfast. All day he felt uneasy, discontented. He wished it had been a holiday. He would have liked to stay at home and look at his specimens. When you came to think of it, business was such a poor thing after all. Answering correspondence and seeing men and undertaking to do this, that, or the other thing, was such a colourless dull way of spending a fine day like this, when one might read in the enclosure, and look out through the railings at anyone who might happen to pass.

He was in a great hurry home that evening, he knew not why. He usually came by omnibus, read

The Globe on the top, and thought that drive through the fresh evening one of the most delightful events of the day. This evening he fancied the omnibus crawled, and that it was most undesirable one's business place should be so far from one's place of residence.

At last he reached the square. And now he was in no hurry to enter the house. He walked all round the flagway, and then went into the enclosure. He walked up and down the path in front of Mrs. Brooks's. It was close upon eight o'clock when he unlocked the gate, crossed the roadway, ascended the steps, and thrust his latch-key into the hole. He pushed open the door, and as he did so he saw coming down the hall aunt and niece. They were dressed for walking. He drew aside, bowed, and raised his hat.

"Thank you," said the elder lady, as she passed him.

The tall lithe form of the girl bent slightly forward, and a smile of gracious recognition came upon her sweet young face.

He had never seen anything so lovely in all his life before. He would have given the world to turn round and walk out in the beautiful soft evening with her. He had often before been attracted by beauty, but never as now. A spirit such as he had never seen in woman before hung about this girl. There was with her a most excellent gentleness. There came with her a subtle presence, a promise of serene repose. You got from her no hint of change, of growth, of development, of progress. It seemed as though she had reached the Elysian Fields, the goal of hope, the sphere of immutability.

“What a sweet girl Miss Gay is!” said Mrs. Brooks that night while he ate his supper. “She doesn’t seem to know she is good-looking, or that she is so amiable. I know I never saw such eyes. If her aunt only kept her in London and brought her out, she would be the beauty of the season—photographed, and her carte in every window.”

“I should be very sorry to see her anything of the kind. She is too good to be a ‘beauty.’

Put a delicate angel like her up among a lot of brazen married women, whose good looks ought to be at home, and not stuck up everywhere all over town for vulgar fools to leer at !”

“Well, I am not in favour of these photographs myself, but I think the girl ought to be brought out. I wonder what will become of the dear child when the aunt dies ?”

“I confess, Mrs. Brooks, I am no great admirer of Society. I think a young girl will learn nothing in it that will be of any advantage to her. I imagine nothing could be better for her, if anything happened to her aunt, than to come and live with you here.”

“I should like that. We could take care of her here, Mr. Colthurst. Have you heard her play ?”

“No. By her appearance she ought to play well.”

“She does. Queer, out-of-the-way, dreamy things that make you feel first as if you wanted to go to sleep, and then as if you wouldn't close your eyes upon any account.”

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"I should like above all things to hear her."

"I'll ask if I may bring you up to-morrow evening. The aunt is a nice sensible lady, and isn't a bit hard on the child."

All that night one phrase of Mrs. Brooks's haunted him: "We could take care of her." We—we—we—we? Take care of her? Take care of that sweet young girl? Ay, though all the world sought to do her harm it should not succeed while he could raise an arm to strike a blow for her.

To-morrow evening he might meet her. He might hear her voice coming to him. He might watch her as she sat and talked. Her hand might touch his. Her dress might brush against him. He might sit and listen to her playing in the twilight. He might pick up a flower or a ribbon or a glove she had worn.

If, when her aunt died, she only came to that house, what care they would take of this gentle-faced girl! For his part, any evening and all Sunday he should be at her disposal. She would

be like Mrs. Brooks's daughter—live with her, dine and sup at the same table, and sit with Mrs. Brooks in the afternoons and evenings. That would be delightful.

When he got back to Manville Square next evening, he did not linger out-of-doors, but walked with a quick step up to the house, and went in. It was close to eight o'clock when he met Mrs. Brooks. She had good news for him. He was to go up with her that evening and be introduced; but Miss Gay had said he must remember they were in the doctor's hands, and he must not take it ill of them if they retired early.

Mrs. Brooks devoted herself to the aunt, and the young people were left almost altogether to themselves. They talked of a great number of things. He found her intelligent, shy, candid, and anxious for surprises.

"You have never been in London before?" he asked.

"No, never. I am greatly delighted with it."

"Would you like to live here always?"

"I should like it very much. But aunt could not manage to live here. In fact we are going back very soon."

"How soon?"

"In a few days. I do not know how many. When we are done with the doctors."

"I am very sorry for the cause of your visit to London. I wish it had nothing to do with doctors."

She smiled, and said gently :

"Ah, so do I."

"What do they say?"

"Aunt does not tell me all. She is afraid of alarming me. I fancy the case is a very bad one."

"Is it of long standing?"

"No. Only a few months."

"I understand you have no other relative in the world but Miss Gay?"

"Not one."

"Suppose the doctors' report is unfavourable, what will you do?"

"Go back to the country with aunt."

"And what will you do then?"

"Wait."

As she said this word she cast her eyes down, and he could see her eyelids were heavy with tears. How he wished and prayed she might come to London when all was over. He could not bear the notion of her going away now. He had made up his mind that as soon as her aunt died she should come to London and live with Mrs. Brooks. "We could take care of the poor child," he said, in his heart. Aloud he said :

"Could you not manage to stay in London?"

"Ah no. The doctors say London will not do. We must get away to the sea—Torquay or Bournemouth, I am not sure which."

"Mrs. Brooks has been giving me a most enthusiastic account of your playing. Are you very fond of music?"

"Yes, very. I care for nothing in the world so much."

"And who are your favourite composers?"

"Mendelssohn and Schubert."

"Do you play much?"

"Not nearly so much as I used."

"Why have you given up playing so much?"

"Ah," she sighed, and shook her head, "I daresay because I am getting old and lazy."

"May I hope you will play a little to-night?"

"I will play with great pleasure, only not too long."

He looked at the shrunken face of the aunt, and said :

"I could not dream of incommoding anyone. Stop whenever you think proper."

She played for half-an-hour, and Colthurst listened enchanted. He knew nothing of music himself, but he loved it dearly. He had never before heard anything so weird, so soft, so tender, so *spirituelle*. It was like the sighing of forlorn winds in mystic groves. He could not play the simplest air, but he could interpret the most intricate, or, at all events, all airs had meanings for him ; right or wrong, he did not pause, he did not care to inquire.

At the end of half-an-hour the aunt came, and said :

“That is enough for to-night, child.”

Colthurst rose to go, and, in taking leave, said :

“You have given me only an appetite for your music. May I, Miss Gay,” turning to the elder lady, “come another night ?”

“Certainly. We shall be very glad to see you if you will not mind our being rude, and turning you away early. We live by rule, you know, and we must take no liberties.”

He went out for a stroll round the square, it being then only ten o'clock. As he walked round and round the square he could think of nothing but the lovely stranger. Every movement of hers had been grace, every word melody. Light seemed to gather round her as she sat. One after the other he recapitulated all she had said or done, with the intention of finding if anything had been out of harmony, if there had been any savour of bad taste. Time after time he had finished the list, with the reflection :

"No, it was as perfect as the most fastidious could dream of—all had been interpenetrated with the essence of grace and spirituality."

Then, from rehearsing the things which had taken place, with a view to finding a flaw, he rehearsed them merely for the delight of keeping her image before his eyes, her voice about his ears.

He returned to the house at about midnight and stole up softly through the house. As he passed the landing on which she lived he stopped a moment, and whispered a little prayer, a little prayer he had forgotten for years. It asked that all under the home roof should be kept from danger and harm through the dark watches of the night.

When he got to his own room he thought of the future. It was all settled. Come what might, she was to stay with Mrs. Brooks, and they were to look after her. How delicious, evening after evening, to sit with her, to hear her talk and play, to see her move! What a future to look forward to! Then there would be no incompleteness in day or evening.

Four delicious evenings passed away in the same manner, and then came bad news: they were leaving to-morrow for Torquay. She told him with a smile, the doctors had said no time should be lost. They were to go, and at once, the east wind now blowing being most injurious.

He was greatly grieved they were leaving so soon. When were they likely to be back again in London?


"We do not know. We cannot say. Perhaps never."

"You must not say that. Surely you will come back again."

"That will depend in a great measure on how we get on at Torquay."

"But you — you will come back to see us once again? I am sure Mrs. Brooks would do anything she could for you. She is the most kind-hearted woman in the world."

For an instant the habitual faint smile left the face of the girl, and her eyes half filled with



tears. Her lips trembled, and she said, in a low unsteady voice :

"I am sure she would be kind to me. Everyone is so kind to me. I am sorry I have to go away."


"But you will come back, won't you?" he pleaded.

She looked up suddenly, with the brightest smile he had ever seen on her face, saying :

"Perhaps I may. I'll try. Now good-bye."

Life went back to its old course at Manville Square. Some other people came and occupied the rooms where she had been. Day after day Edwin Colthurst watched the summer ripen and the green deepen in the foliage of the square. Day by day he dreamed of her return and of delicious evenings spent within the charm of her voice, the magic of her presence.

As he drove in and out of town, he conjured with her image until all the recesses of his memory were filled up with pictures of her. He would have given anything he possessed to



write to her, to get a single line from her ; but although the period of their acquaintance had been long enough for him to fall in love, it had not been long enough to warrant him in asking to be allowed to write.

The summer waned and autumn was at hand. Still no word came from the guests of June. The rich green of the foliage was here and there touched by the first foreboding finger of decay. Morning found a hoar-frost on the ground, and evening brought a chilly dew.

Old people avoided the enclosure after sundown, and the delicate chose the sunny side of the square. The buxom housemaid had married the baker's man, and stood no longer at the head of the area-steps with arms akimbo. The birds were getting ready for winter, and saving up their songs to keep the cold out.

It was in the November of the year, when the first fine sifting of snow fell out of the sullen sky, that a letter came to Mrs. Brooks. It had a black border, was not in the same handwriting as the former one, and ran as follows :

"DEAR MRS. BROOKS,

"As you will gather from the edge of this sheet, the worst has come. I hoped against hope for days and months. It is a heavy trial, but God's will be done. I trust to be with you on Thursday next, when I can tell you all.—Yours sincerely,

HELEN GAY."

Mrs. Brooks looked at the mortuary card, and put the card and the letter back into the black-bordered envelope, saying to herself: "They were both Helens. Poor thing, we must be good to her. Poor thing!"

When Colthurst came home she told him the news. He read the letter slowly; then said:

"We must do all we can for her."

"Yes, poor soul."

He took up the mortuary card, read it, stared at it, stared at Mrs. Brooks, dropped it, staggered to his feet, and cried:

"Good God! it is the girl who is dead!"

"No, no!"

"Yes. 'Aged eighteen.'"

THE
LAST OF THE BARNARD LINE




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THE
LAST OF THE BARNARD
LINE.

ABERMOUTH possesses no attraction for the stranger. The Aber flows under its western side, but is not navigable for ships higher up than within four miles of the town. Six miles below the town lies the little harbour, and outside the harbour the German Ocean. The town is dingy and forbidding. The country people living round it never visit it on anything less than compulsion. Girt by a garden, in the middle of the town stands Aber Castle, where five years ago dwelt Mrs. Barnard and her



daughter Louisa, the last of the Barnard name and race in that quarter of the country. The Barnards were a ruined family. Out of the vast possessions once belonging to their house nothing now remained but the old castle, half in ruins, and Mrs. Barnard's jointure, affording no more than the sober comforts and luxuries necessary to a couple of gentlewomen. Mrs. and Miss Barnard had just returned from the Continent, where the daughter had been at school since her twelfth year. She was now eighteen, and before a month had gone by the whole neighbourhood was busy with her name. All who had seen her declared such fine exquisite beauty as hers could not be found anywhere else along the German Ocean. She was slightly above the Medician standard. In her cheeks was a faint shell-pink flush of colour wandering through a delicate pearl-lily tint. In her temples the blue veins lay like shadows on snow. Her eyes were large and luminous, blue, with the heavenly underglow of pink found in lapis-lazuli. Her figure



was slender without sharpness, round in outline, ethereal in effect. She looked fragile, yet never complained. It seemed as though the sunshine of one day would take away the pure lustre of her complexion, as if one chill would suffice to wither that slender form. Still she took no care, and went out in shower and shine like a milkmaid.

Soon the dull streets of Abermouth heard once more the sound of wheels and hoofs going to and from Aber Castle. Around Abermouth nothing but the beautiful Miss Barnard was spoken of. The Barnards had during centuries been noted for good looks, but in this girl, the last of the race, the blood had put forth all its resources to produce one supreme creation ere it died out for ever. What a sensation she would make at Court! All agreed that if she was the last of the House of Barnard, and if the fortunes of her house were in the dust, she might, by alliance, quarter her arms with those of the highest in the land, and insure that the de-

scendants of the Barnards in the female line should rival in fortune the old owners of Aber Castle. She was sure to make a splendid match, one of the best in England; no one could for a moment question that. She had another thing, too, in her favour; her mother was a thorough woman of the world.

In the August of that year the yacht *White Swan*, fore-and-aft schooner, two-hundred-and-forty tons, dropped anchor in the harbour below the town of Abermouth. On the evening of the day the *White Swan* anchored, her owner, Captain William Stair of The Blues, took a man and boy with him in the yawl, and, the wind being fair, ran up the Aber towards the town on his way to his old friend Gerard Trevor, whose commodious cottage stood on the Aber a mile above the town, and who had arranged to go in the yacht with Stair to Genoa, and come back overland, leaving the yacht to be sailed back by Shaddick, the master. By the banks under the castle is a broad smooth terrace. The river is not wide here; and

as William Stair sailed silently by he saw Louisa Barnard sitting under a tree on the terrace, book in hand. The light wind was dead aft. Stair had the tiller. The sail lay over the starboard side. He put the tiller hard-a-port ; the yawl veered slightly ; the sail shook, and with a rattle went over to port. Louisa Barnard raised her head, attracted by the sound, and saw Captain Stair for the first time. " I thought," he said to himself, " no matter how interesting the book is, when the sail jibbed she'd raise her head ; and, by heavens, what a face and head it is ! " He gazed a few moments in mute admiration. " Hard-a-starboard, 'sir ! " cried the man tending the sheet forward. Instantly Stair obeyed the order ; but it was too late, and the yawl ran aground under the terrace, not twenty yards from where the girl sat. The man jumped overboard into the shoal water, lifted the nose of the boat out of the gravel, and shoved her off. In less than five minutes the yawl was again under weigh, and in less than half-an-hour she moored at the little slip under Eyot Cottage, where Gerard

Trevor lived. The two friends had much to talk over. They had not met for more than a year. But, before an hour had passed, Stair had asked who the beauty was, and had learned her history from the owner of Eyot Cottage. They had arranged to sail three days after Stair's arrival, no longer delay being prudent in view of Stair's leave and the uncertainty of the sea voyage. In the meantime Stair was Trevor's guest, and it was necessary Trevor should amuse him. Stair confessed there were few amusements he would like better than an introduction to the beautiful Miss Barnard of Aber Castle. On the day following his arrival he was introduced. On the day they had appointed to sail he bade the master weigh anchor, and head for Portsmouth, with Trevor on board. "You'll like the run round the coast," he said to Trevor. "I'll hang on here until you telegraph me from Portsmouth, and then I'll cut on to you like a shot." The yacht took six days to get from Aber Harbour to Portsmouth. On the sixth day Stair received a telegram, announcing the

arrival of the schooner, and that a fair wind was blowing away. To his astonishment, Trevor got the following telegram: "Try to forgive me. I cannot leave this. You may guess what is the matter. Go on to Genoa with the yacht. I'll stay here till you come back, unless I am unfortunate between this and then. I telegraph Shaddick full instructions." He got back from Trevor a brief message: "Caught at last. All right. We go on to Genoa. I shall be back in time to be best man I hope." The final instruction to Shaddick was: "When you land Mr. Trevor at Genoa come back to Aber Harbour, and report yourself at Eyot Cottage, Abermouth." Captain William Stair had resolved to apply for an extension of leave on the plea of urgent private business.

For upwards of twelve years William Stair had been in the world. From his eighteenth year to his thirtieth he had come and gone through the best sets in London. When he was twenty-five his father died, leaving a magnificent unencumbered estate and enormous personal property. The estate

had come to him through the female line. Some day, when old Sir Randolph Stair died, the Stair property and the Stair baronetcy would be his. Over and over again the Stair family had declined a coronet. They were prouder of their name as it stood in the annals of their country, and would change it in no way. They were a younger branch of the old earldom of Stair, and since there could be with convenience no second simple title of that name, they had remained commoners until the seventeenth century, when they accepted a baronetcy of James. The Stairs claimed descent from an equestrian family of old Rome, and allowed no one in England such a lineage as their own. For years mothers of daughters had cast eager eyes upon this good-looking rich captain, and he had basked in the smiles of the most delectable maidens of Belgravia. To all these triumph was denied and reserved for the lithe, shy, fair daughter of sequestered Aber Castle. He was master of himself and of his fortune, and within a month from his sail up the Aber he had

placed both at Miss Barnard's feet, and had received a favourable reply. He now enjoyed a life in such utter contrast to anything of which he had had experience before, he could scarcely believe he was the same man. That quiet little cottage by the river, that solitary sail down to the castle standing in the midst of that sleepy town, the precious society in the halls and gardens of that old house, and the dear foreshadowings of a dearer future, filled him with a refined and elevated joy. All that was horsey and slangy and coarse had been left behind, and he was now face to face with a calm, pure, pastoral content and a fine poetic passion. When Trevor came back to Eyot Cottage he found not only an engagement, but that the wedding had been fixed for a day two months off.

A fortnight before the day appointed for the wedding, the *White Swan* dropped anchor in Aber Harbour, and Shaddick reported himself. His orders were to hold himself in readiness for sailing next evening for London. The next evening the


owner of the yacht came aboard, accompanied by his friend, Mr. Gerard Trevor. Shaddick did not like the look of the weather, and predicted a storm. His master had urgent need of the yacht in London at the earliest moment, so the anchor was weighed and the schooner stood out to sea. That night a terrible storm burst up out of the southward and shook the sea into terrified billows, and tore from the crests of the waves scarfs of shrieking foam. A week passed, and nothing was heard of the *White Swan*. On the tenth day after the storm a report reached the papers that the yacht *White Swan* had been found a total wreck on one of the uninhabited Hebrides. The report went on to say that, considering the violence of the late gale and that the island was a bare rock, and that nothing had been heard of the crew, there was no doubt all on board had perished. A month, two months went by, and brought no tidings. By that time all hope of ever seeing anyone who had sailed out of Aber Harbour in the *White Swan* had been abandoned by those interested in Stair,

Trevor, or the crew. Apart from the horrible nature of the calamity and the natural grief of Louisa Barnard, this was a great blow to Aber Castle, for everything had been in favour of William Stair. He had had position, youth, good looks, and an illustrious name. Now all was gone, and those who knew the Castle folk declared there was scarcely room to hope Louisa Barnard would ever "do so well" again. But when, after three months of seclusion, she began to move about in her mourning, the prophets lost faith in their forecast, and admitted that the pensive air which had succeeded acute grief, and the pathos of the black weeds of one so young and so bereft, had added a new fascination to the girl's charms. So thought the old Earl of Isla, who was on a visit to his friend Gervaise, of Gervaise Hall, in the autumn of 1875. The earl was rich, old, and a bachelor. He had the reputation of having been one of the wildest men about town in his day, and now that he was past sixty, and, like Hamlet, stout and short

of breath, there were still wicked stories circulated about him ; and at the Travellers', or White's, any man could tell you queer things of him still. He had never seen anyone who had so taken his fancy as Miss Barnard. His nephew and heir had quarrelled with him ; his lordship had for some time been obliged to admit to himself he was no longer young ; and it would not, after all, be a bad thing to give an heir in the direct line to the acres of Scotch moor and the millions of tons of coal hidden away under the quiet grazing-lands of Cumberland, the property of the future lords of Isla Hall in Argyllshire.

If the Earl of Isla had been a man of pleasure in his youth, he had been a man of the world in his manhood, and was now a man of business. So, without risking making himself ridiculous by posing as a sentimental lover before the girl, he went to the mother, and put the matter to her in a middle-aged, matter-of-fact, yet very kindly way. At first Mrs. Barnard was shocked ; then she reflected that the past could not be

altered, nor the sea forced to give up its dead. When she died Louisa would be wholly alone and unprovided for. The Earl was, no doubt, advanced in years for a girl of her daughter's age, but then he had wealth, position, and title. She asked a week to consider. Lord Isla granted her wish, and kissed her hand gallantly. At the end of a week she told the earl she was perfectly satisfied with him as a suitor, and that he had her full permission to address her daughter on the subject of his hopes. He spoke to Louisa. At first she burst into tears. He was patient, respectful, sympathetic. He did not hope for an immediate answer; he was prepared to wait; her mother approved of him. His only hope was that she would allow him to devote his life to making her happy. He had no desire she should dismiss the other from her mind; he did not expect she would love him all at once; but it was well known girls outlived griefs such as hers, and afterwards became contented wives. She said: "No, no, no—never!" But he was wise and




learned in the ways of human nature. His theory was that no man ever tried to win a woman and failed, unless that man happened to be a fool. For a month he laid persistent siege to Miss Barnard. She was worn out with sorrow, and careless of her fate; she said to herself her life was over, and she did not care what befell her. He wearied her; her mother now and then impressed upon her the desirability of the match. She did not care for life, and saw no chance of finding peace in death; she might be at rest if she gave way. At length she consented—for the sake of peace; but she imposed two conditions. The ceremony was not to take place for a year; and if, in the meantime, William Stair should be found, Lord Isla was to renounce all claim to her hand.

Time went on, and the life of Louisa Barnard knew little change. Her new suitor did not act as an ardent lover so much as a sincere and kindly friend. All at once a profound commotion was created at Aber Castle. A telegram, dated Callao,

announced the arrival there of William Stair, rescued from the stranded wreck of the *White Swan* by the Norwegian barque *Linden*, bound from Bergen in Norway to Callao. When rescued, he was insensible owing to a wound on the head and exposure. Nothing was found on him that could indicate his importance, and, most remarkable circumstance of all, the bark *Linden* never spoke a single vessel the whole way out. Stair had offered the captain large sums to land him somewhere on the east Atlantic coast. But the captain was a prudent business man, and did not believe the rescued man had the means to pay the sum offered. The telegram, which had been a long time coming, wound up with the assurance he would not lose an hour in getting back to Aber Castle. Of those who had been in the *White Swan*, only William Stair, the owner, had been saved. Lord Isla took the news much better than might have been expected. Although he had been wild in his day, he was an honourable gentleman, and at once abandoned his claim in

a letter of courtly politeness and manly dignity. "The sea has given my love back to me!" Louisa cried, in a passion of love and gratitude; "and once he is here in England, he shall never tempt the sea again! He must promise me that before we are married. My William will promise me, I know. My William! Oh, what an escape I have had! What an escape! If I had been married when that message came!" And she paused and shuddered, not daring to pursue the subject further. A fortnight passed, and then came another telegram. It said he could not set out at once for England. He was detained in Lima by—illness. She would go to Lima. She insisted upon going. Her mother would not hear of such a thing. Another fortnight brought another telegram. He was not better. A fourth telegram—not from him, from some unknown man. All was over! She should never see him again. She had been twice widowed, never wed. She took the news gently and quietly. Her mother was astonished at her lack of grief. She

grew silent and reserved. She put on her mourning once again. She loved best that seat under the tree where she had seen him that day he sailed his boat up the river. No day passed she did not sit here awhile, book in hand. She always kept her face towards the little harbour. She would bend her eyes on her book for awhile, and then raise them to the river. He would surely come in his boat round the point some day. She never changed her book. She never altered the page. The volume was one of short poems. The page was the one she had been reading that day he had first come sailing by. It was scored in his hand opposite the lines: "He will not come, she said;" and in the margin was written by his hand: "A false prophet." In sunshine or in rain she came there, and sat each day. They say she took cold. She declared she was quite well. How her mother wept over her! She told her mother there was no need of tears. Day by day she grew weaker. Those who saw her now knew what was going on. She held firm to her faith



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He would not say that it was the "best" name, the
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**JANE MARSHALL'S GOLDEN
WEDDING**

he would one day sail in his boat round the point. Yes, she knew they should meet once again. He had written in the margin: "A false prophet;" and he was certain to be right. It so fell out he was right; but his prophecy came to be fulfilled not as she had anticipated. One noon in May, as she sat in the accustomed seat, the book slipped from her hand, her head sank upon her bosom, and his prophecy was fulfilled. But instead of his sailing round that point to her, her spirit had gone out upon the waters to the Great Ocean to meet his, where tempests are hushed and loyal spirits are joined for ever.

JANE MARSHALL'S GOLDEN
WEDDING






JANE MARSHALL'S GOLDEN WEDDING.

IT was in the good old coaching-days that Jane Hewett married Augustus Marshall of Storewick. Those were very good days for all who happened to be in comfortable circumstances and disposed to happiness. But to the poor and dyspeptic those good old coaching-days were no better than they might have been. Augustus Marshall was in prosperous worldly circumstances, had one of the finest houses in Storewick, was proud of his dining-room table and pictures, and, when he was married to Jane, proud, above all, of her.

The marriage was not popular in Storewick.



They said he might have done wiser, and she might have done better. He was a tall, dark, thin man of forty-five, already losing his hair at the crown and temples; and she a lithe, dark, handsome maid of one-and-twenty. He had been married before, but had been wifeless for ten years. Of his first marriage a son eighteen and a daughter sixteen years of age survived, and lived with their father in his substantial house at Palmer's Hill, just outside the town.

There were other reasons beside the difference of age which made people shake their heads at this match. First of all, he was a widower, and ought not, at his time of life, and with grown-up children, presume to select the prettiest girl in all Storewick for a wife. In the next place, she had a little money, a couple of thousand pounds; and it looked greedy in a man in his good position to snatch, not only the prettiest girl in the town, but one who, together with her youth and good looks, which might in all reason be supposed to be intended for a younger

man, had also money, which would be of great assistance to any enterprising young man ; whereas two thousand pounds, more or less, to Augustus Marshall was nothing at all. Against this last count, it may be said Marshall settled the girl's fortune upon herself—a provision no young man could make, and employ the money in honourable trade.

Notwithstanding all these objections of the gossips, the rector of St. Catherine's Church tied the knot. Also, in spite of what the gossips said, Jane Hewett was meekly glad to marry Augustus Marshall, and very proud of her tall, handsome, grave-mannered husband. His presence had for her the solemn peace of a church, without the sense of fear or personal responsibility. She looked up to him in a grave, sweet, old-fashioned way, as though she had but just come out of the patriarchal age, and had not yet shaken off patriarchal notions.

There was not much humour in either bride or bridegroom ; but no one could resist seeing

the laughable sides of some of the incidents attending the wedding. The bridegroom had asked his son to pack his travelling-case and forward it to the bride's house, whence the pair were to start on their honeymoon for London; and it was not until a few minutes before the time appointed for starting that the son remembered he had, in the confusion, forgotten to do so. The departure of the newly-married couple had to be delayed some hours in consequence of this. During the enforced delay, a pair of lovers were missed, and the rumour circulated that they had made a runaway match of it, using the post arranged for the bride and bridegroom to accomplish their purpose. Subsequently the two were found, seated on the back stairs. Then a boy of four, brother of the bride, was lost, and could not be found for a long time, until at last they came upon him in an empty hamper in a lumber-room, whither he had carried a vast quantity of sweetstuff, among which he lay very sticky and very soundly asleep. Then the bridegroom sud-

denly recollected he had left his pocket-book in the coat he had worn yesterday, and that he had only a few pounds in loose change in his pocket. At all these small circumstances there was a good deal of laughing, and they afterwards served as milestones to be referred to in the progress of that day.

At last the bride and bridegroom got into the coach, and through the shouting of the crowd, among whom silver was thrown, started, drawn by four good steppers, towards the first stage on their way to London.

They were in no great haste. It was a long time since he had taken a holiday, and he had made up his mind to think nothing of business, and to forget for a few weeks all worry in the society of his beautiful wife.

Although it was no more than a hundred-and-fifty miles from Stowick to London, the bride and bridegroom consumed no fewer than six days in the journey. Travelling was very quick then. It was possible to get from Stowick to London

in about four days. But they were in no haste. They stopped at six towns on their way up, and saw all the sights time allowed them to see. They had been married on Monday, and on Saturday of the same week they drove under the archway of one of the most famous inns in all London, hard by Ludgate Hill.


Jane had loved her husband before she was married to him ; but as the days went on her love grew deeper and stronger, and mingled with a devotional sentiment which illumined all her thoughts with a steady peaceful light.

He thought through her mind and anticipated her desires. He was not foolish or fanciful about his beautiful Jane. He never pretended to be a year less than his age, and yet he had a mind for her youth ; for he did not take her to places with a view to pleasing himself directly, but of delighting himself through her pleasure. He had come to that time of life when the gloss of novelty is worn off most things.

But the heart is the only thing in man that

need not grow old with years. The passions of youth had cooled, and he was in the calm reflective period of middle life. He was no longer impulsive or narrow-minded. His eye for beauty had not dimmed, and he felt in himself that he had reached the period at which there is a decay of sentiment, when novelty declines. Hence he had no fear of taking a young and beautiful wife twenty-four years his junior. He wasn't in the least romantic. He never for a moment deceived himself into believing that, by having her at his side, he could diminish his years. At the same time he resolved not to exact from her the manner of more years than she had reached.


In no time of all her life had Jane been more happy than during these few weeks in London. Strong as her feeling of regard had been for her husband before marriage, she had a vague misgiving that she should interest him little when they came to be constantly together. She knew he was a grave, sedate, thoughtful man. She felt



there was no danger of any reasonable man accusing her of frivolity. But she was in great dread that he should find her trivial and unworthy of him. His first wife had been an unusually clever woman, and he was an unusually clever man. What had she to give such a man, who, in addition to his native cleverness, owned twenty-four years more experience of the world and life? Only her duty and her love. She brought him no money that would be of any use to him. She was not polished or accomplished. She had not been accustomed to so good a home as his, and gravely doubted if she could, with justice to him, discharge the duties of its mistress. Then there were the grown-up son and daughter. How should she get on with them? They of course would know his ways better than she at first. Would they, when she made mistakes because of ignorance of his habits, laugh at her? She could hardly bear that, not for her own sake, but for his. She knew he was a just man, and that anything of the kind would pain him.

But those few weeks of undivided companionship in the old inn hard by Ludgate Hill broke down for ever the fears that stood in her path. They showed her how perfectly she and he were suited to each other. They left no room for doubt. He would be just and kind and affectionate to her all the days of his life, and she should love and reverence him.

This time of quiet happiness at the old inn made a deep impression also on him. He had told himself a thousand times before he had been married that he was not making a fool of himself. He was no hot-headed boy running after the first pretty face he saw. He had known Jane Hewett since her birth. He had watched her with interest for a few years back, and he felt sure his interpretation of her could not be wrong. He had marked the docile reverence of her nature, and the clinging gentleness of her heart. He knew she was not amused by the vain or frivolous distractions that youth often calls pleasure. He felt he was not as young as she, and that a younger husband




might, for a time, engage her heart more completely. But would the younger man be as truly careful of her happiness as he? Young men were jealous and exacting. He knew her and himself too well to be jealous, and he had been too long in the world to be exacting. He knew that, as a rule, the happiest marriages were those in which there was more similarity in ages than between her and him. But then he thought she was much older in her mind than in her years, and he was much younger in heart than men usually are at forty-five.

So he married young and beautiful Jane Hewett, and took her away with him to London. But it was not until those few peaceful weeks of uninterrupted intercourse that he found out the great grace and beauty of Jane's spirit. She seemed not so much anxious to glide into all his notions and ways, and assimilate her spirit with his, as to adopt his manner of thought instinctively. A natural pride in this triumphant proof of the wisdom of his choice added in no

small way to his sense of happiness. It is pleasant to win, pleasanter to win against odds, and he felt he had won against long odds. To feel the love of this beautiful young girl winding itself daily round him was very gratifying ; to recollect that she loved him above all others, and in spite of a great disparity in their years, made his heart rejoice. All must go well now. A new and a bright life had begun for him. Those who had predicted misfortune would be convinced of their mistake. He was now finally settled in life, and, with his beautiful wife at his side, he was prepared to glide down to the Great Ocean to which we all are drifting.


This old inn they stopped at had an attraction for him it did not possess for her ; at least as yet she could not be expected to take a very intelligent interest in the business affairs of her husband. Augustus Marshall was well-to-do, in fact one of the best-off men in Storewick. He was not himself very much occupied in business, but had all his money in one of the great midland coaching



systems of the day. He was more or less a sleeping partner. Still, although he took no ostensible part in the business, he now and then travelled over the system, acting rather as a head-inspector than as a principal, and never interfering personally, but reporting to the active partner anything he thought calling for remark.


Here, in this busy inn, while he was waiting for his young wife to dress before they went out of a morning, or when they had come back and she was resting, he came out on one of the interior galleries. Here in this inner courtyard he could look down at the coaches as they came and went; and while drawing, from the number of passengers they carried and the frequency of their arrival, some conception of the enormous human transactions London dealt in, he was able, in a leisurely easy way, to pick up hints for the improvement of the system over which his interest extended.

As it not infrequently happens, matters suggested to an indolent spectator from an un-



usual standpoint are more practical in their nature than those arising to equal intelligence in the thick of the bustle and from the old place. So Augustus Marshall picked up many pieces of improvement and economy, which afterwards led to useful reforms and increased profits in the business wherein he held a share.

But the dearest and the direst hours must pass away, and at length the honeymoon of the pair was over, and they found themselves on their way home. Their joint past was full of happy memories ; their future looked smooth and blithe as the broad level road along which the coach swung through the sunshine. He felt younger than when he had set out. Success and hope lighten the burden of years, and he, in his great venture in wedlock, had been abundantly successful, and the rest of his life lay before him as placid and composed as the past few weeks. He was a strong healthy man, who had always taken care of himself, and who, excepting accidents, might look forward to reach the scriptural years



of three-score-and-ten. Suppose he lived to be seventy, she would then be forty-six, and he should be able to leave her and her family amply provided for. He would leave her free to do as she chose. She should marry again if she liked ; but he would take excellent care no man should take from her the money he should leave her. No. He would tie that up, so that no one but Jane herself could touch a single penny of it. Yes, he should take as good care of her worldly affairs after his death as man could, at the same time leaving her perfectly free to wed again or keep her weeds.

As they drove home through the sunshine to Storewick, they had long, grave, friendly chats, in which they spoke of the past and present, the short happy past, the long, prosperous, and happy future. He told her all about his business : how his income was large and increasing yearly ; how he had put aside ample provision for his son and daughter ; and how, when he died, all the residue of his fortune would go to her and her children, if it pleased God to send them any.

Upon this she put her young round arms about him and clung to him, and cried out :

“ No, no, no, my love, my husband, my own ; you must not think, you must not speak, of dying and leaving me. When you die I will die also. You are a strong man, full of life and health. Why should you think of dying ? Promise me, promise your own Jane, that where you go all through life, I too shall go with you.”

He answered :

“ I promise you that, my Jane.”


“ And I pray heaven,” she said, then fervently casting her eyes up, “ that when he goes out of this world, I too may go.”

Then she dropped her red cheek against his breast and clung to him, murmuring :

“ My husband, my dear husband, oh, no one shall ever take you away from me.”

“ No one, my dear love.”

“ And when God takes you out of the world, I pray He may take me with you, my love, my husband, my dear husband, my dear love.”



He looked down on her with great regard and affection. He took her hand in his, and pressed it softly, tenderly.

“Jane,” he said, pressing her to him, “we will not think of gloomy subjects to-day. It was ill considered of me to allude to anything distressing while we are in the last days of our honeymoon. Suppose we put a different aspect on the affair. We went up to London for our wedding-tour. Business will not often bring me up to London, dear. It is now many years since I have been there ; indeed, not since I came up with my first wife. We stopped at the same old place, up the same old inner yard. Let us take a cheerful view of the future. In five-and-twenty years I shall have reached no more than the scriptural three-score-and-ten ; I shall have earned a holiday then. Suppose we, Jane, my wife, make up our minds to celebrate our silver wedding in the place where we celebrated our wedding ?”

“Ah, that is a good cheerful thought. Let it be as you say ; and all the time we shall be

together. You will never leave me, but keep me by your side, and let me look up to you for guidance and with all my love?"

"Yes, my most dear, my sweet. We will go on through life sober and fast friends, and homely man and wife."

"Homely man and wife, love. How sweet are these words, coming from you to me, and meaning what they mean. It is good to think you, whom I honour with all my heart, will let me be your friend."

"You shall be my closest friend and dearest love all the time."

"And then, when the time for our golden wedding comes, I shall be past the scriptural age, and I shall be with you in heaven. Is not that good for me to think?"


"We shall get gloomy again," said the husband, "if you talk any more of that matter. It will surely be enough for the present if we settle about the silver one."

Here the subject dropped, and they took up



some less sombre theme as they rolled along the great turnpike-road towards their home.

The gossipers of Storewick were gravely disconcerted by the way in which Mrs. Augustus Marshall accommodated herself to her new duties. She had the quiet careful gentleness that wins upon people without effort. In a few months her stepchildren were on the most affectionate terms with her. At first, no doubt, they had been a little cold and suspicious; but as the days went by the charm of her nature wrought on them, and they grew to look upon her as an affectionate and just sister. It is a prudent rule, when a woman marries into a house which a previous wife has ruled, that the new mistress should dismiss the servants of the old; but Jane adopted no such course. She retained the old servants, and got on well with them. She had a soft heart and a just mind, and the dead woman's children and the servants never said harsh things of her to a soul, and in time they spoke of her with loving respect. Her lightest



wish became law ; not the law born of fear, but of dutiful affection. They would rather have incurred any penalty than willingly cause her pain.

Day by day she grew into the routine of his new life, and hour by hour she grew deeper into the heart of her husband. She made his home beautiful for him. All the flowers of summer made him think of her ; for when he saw a rose or a tulip he wished to bring it to her. All the graces and sweetness of his home had the sense of her presence in them. His beautiful young wife did not obtrude her love on him. Without being coy and shy, she kept no closer to him than she knew he wished. Without seeming to do it, she daintily held him still as a lover. He felt, although he had won her, he must still woo her. Day by day trifling traits in character or her manner displayed themselves, and gave that sense of vague anxious expectancy that lends the dear unrest to love. All things she did admirably, for she always

thought of love. As the fine spirit of a painter is displayed in his crudest line, her touches about the house were ever telling him the story of her heart. If you look at the pencil outline of the head of a child by Raphael, you feel, after awhile, as though a subtle radiation from a divine spirit of beauty was stealing from that paper to you, and warming your spirit with rich comfort. So the simplest housewife touches of a lover's hand may show to the beloved the spirit of the owner, and keep him warm with gentle surprise.

On Sundays they all went to the old parish church together, the two children walking in front, Augustus Marshall and his wife behind. He was not a vain man, nor one given to vainglory in anything he owned; but he could not help feeling mild satisfaction when he knew all turned their heads to look at his fresh-cheeked bride, and all looked with admiration. This feeling of satisfaction arose out of no foolish pride in his young wife, but out of the reflection that all

looked upon his Jane as the handsomest girl in the town, and any young man in Storewick would be delighted and flattered to lead her up the church on his arm as his bride; and yet she did not marry one of these young men, but him, Augustus Marshall, the middle-aged widower. She had not married him because he was well-to-do, for she had loved him before she married him, and since their marriage her love for him had grown deeper and wider. He could see this by the greater subjugation of her spirit—a subjugation not brought about by oppression on his part, but by the burden of her love for him weighing down on her own heart.

He was neither wholly busy nor wholly idle. He had leisure to take his sweet young wife here and there; for long drives into the peaceful country, where the red and white cows chewed the cud half the day in cool shadows of spreading oaks; where the squirrels scampered through the trees, while high above, lost in the large radiance of day, the lark sang; where clear brooks flowed

over weedy stones, and cooled the dusty banks, and freshened the air with fine moisture ; where, after awhile, they came to a red-tiled roadside inn deeply imbedded in chestnuts, with a large portico in which men sat in the heat of noon drinking beer and lazily chatting, while from their pipes ascended slowly thin whiffs of smoke that rose and expanded gradually as they mounted the motionless air. There the bandy-legged ostler came and led the horse round to the coachyard ; and he and she went in, and as soon as he had got her a cool drink, he went out to order their meal and see his horse attended to.

Sometimes he would bring a rod and line with him, and when they had eaten and drunk he would take his rod and she her book or work, and walk to some brook, remaining there until the sun began to dip. Then, with his tied-up fishingrod under one arm and his wife resting on the other, he would go back to the inn. Here, having again had refreshments, he left her to see the horse put to, and drove her home through

the balmy dusk and darkness. The pace at which they went drew a cool breeze around their warm faces, and added to the calm deliciousness of the time. She was gifted with a fresh sweet voice, and sang old English and Irish ballads with taste and feeling. Often, as they drove through the fine summer nights, she would sing to him. When he sat listening to her at such times he used to say to himself :

“This is my wife Jane, my dear young wife Jane, singing to me. It is like being born over again to be with my Jane thus. Before we were married, I thought: ‘She cannot make me young.’ And yet I am young now, younger than I was twenty years ago; not in the sense of being foolish and ill-judging, but in the sense of happiness. I never was so happy as I am now. Never in all my life.”

Then there were quiet peaceful fireside times, when in winter they all sat round the hearth, he in the left-hand chimney-corner, the boy and girl in front, and she, his lovely young wife, in the

right-hand chimney-corner. Sometimes she would sing to them. Sometimes they played a rubber—father and daughter against mother and son. What a sweet mother! Often he would take her graceful hand in his large palm, and pat it with the other. Often he would draw her head down to him, and kiss it. He called her his “child,” his “dear child,” his “sweet child.” She liked to be called his child, for she felt herself no more than a helpless little one when she was near him; and the sense that she was helpless gathered a subtle intoxication from the fact that he was strong, and that he desired her to lean on him.

Time went on. Months of happy wedded life slipped uneventfully away, and grew to years. It pleased heaven to send them no children. This weighed upon her heavily, for it would have been dear to her to think so new and precious a link should exist between her and her husband.

Months grew into years; and while the home-

life of Augustus and Jane Marshall became sweeter as it mellowed with unfretted time, business had begun to trouble the master of the house. Already this cruel innovation, steam, had begun to compete with the coaches in the district in which Marshall was interested. They had not been five years married when their share of the profits had been diminished very considerably. He had saved money. Still it was unpleasant to find a fine income decreasing steadily. At this time he began to fear matters would not ever get back to the happy old condition.

The years rolled swiftly by. The boy got an appointment in the East India Company's service, and the girl married well, her husband being a large sugar-grower in Jamaica. Thus the husband and wife, still childless, had now company only for the chimney-corners; and the heat of the fire passed idly into the body of the vacant room. No cloud had fallen on the happiness of that pair. He was grizzled, and showed signs of approaching age. She was still young


and beautiful. Her beauty had warmed and developed. Delicacy of line and tint had been succeeded by grandeur in proportion and colour. She was the finest woman, as she had ten years ago been the most beautiful girl, in Storewick.

Meanwhile the iron grew upon the road, and Augustus Marshall's income had been diminished by one-half in less than ten years. He had saved twelve thousand pounds, and the interest of this, combined with what still came to him from coaches, enabled them to live very comfortably. Still it was not pleasant for him to think that, as he grew older, he grew no richer—that, in fact, his fortune declined as his years advanced.

Ten years more found the young wife of twenty years ago the comeliest woman of her age in Storewick. She was now upwards of forty, but she did not look more than two or three and twenty. Her husband was now between sixty and seventy, and began to show signs of age. He was gray now, and bent, and more feeble

than his years would account for. People said the triumph of steam had much to do with the breakdown appearance of the man. He got no more from coaches than a fourth of his former income. He had his twelve thousand pounds laid by; and if anything happened to him, that would be a modest provision for his wife. Many in Storewick thought that if Augustus Marshall were to die, and leave his widow wholly unprovided for, she need not be long without a mate if she chose to wed again.

Two or three more years passed, and then came the crisis in the business affairs of Augustus Marshall. Up to this, one of the principal lines of the coaches, the last one of importance left to him, had not been endangered. Now the project was mooted of making a railway, which would cause the instant stoppage of the coaches. This roused the flagging energies of the old man. He determined to resist that scheme with all the force he could command. His partner did not assent to this. He said the making of this



railway was a certainty, and no power at their command could by any possibility stop it. "So," he added, "as I am an older man than you, Marshall, and I am not inclined to go on with this opposition, the best thing for you to do is to buy me out, take over the concern altogether, and do what you please."


After a little while Marshall resolved upon doing this. Marshall paid the purchase-money with ten thousand pounds in cash, and the balance by mortgage. When this was done Marshall set himself to oppose, in every way ingenuity could suggest, the proposed railway. For more than a year the case dragged on. He was frequently in London, about this time, but, for the convenience of being close to the lawyers, he stayed at an hotel near Trafalgar Square; and so deeply had he become absorbed in this great case, that he never went to see his former quarters, the old inn where he had spent his happy honeymoon close on twenty-five years ago.

It would be soon time for celebrating their

silver wedding ; in less than a year they would be twenty-five years married. How time flies ! Then he was in the full vigour of healthy manhood. Now he was brokendown and feeble and old. Twenty-five years, and not one day of it would he cancel ; not one hour. She had been the best of wives to him, and he had tried to be good to her and do his duty by her, and he hoped and believed she, too, was content with what had been.

Yes, what had been was all right ; but how about the future ? This terrible law seemed all at once to have taken a turn dead against him. All his money was in this case. If he lost, he lost all. If he won, he won everything. The affair had taken a very threatening aspect of late.

He grew week by week more feeble and brokendown. He was ordered home from London, and told he must not harass himself with business. He returned to Storewick. But business worries pursued him ; and before the



year was out, before the case had been decided, he passed quietly away.

That year the case was decided in favour of the railway company; and upon winding up Marshall's affairs, it was discovered that little more than her own two thousand pounds remained for the widow.

She did not marry again. The money was invested so as to yield an annuity of one hundred and twenty pounds.

She never left Storewick but once. Then she went to London. She arrived at Paddington, and bade the cabman drive to the old place where she had spent her honeymoon. "I have not had my silver wedding," she thought, "and I will go see the place. It is a long long time since then."

For an hour she drove through streets she had never seen before. Everything had altered.

"Everything is changed," she thought; "but nothing more than I. Then I was young, and, they said, good-looking. Now——"

The cab had stopped. The driver had descended, and, as he opened the door, said :

"This is it, ma'am."

"This can't be it. Where is the inn?"

"There is no inn that I can see, ma'am. Better ask at the railway booking-office at the top."

She walked feebly up in her poor widow-weeds, and asked a young man in the booking-office :

"Can you tell me where the Belle Sauvage Inn is?"

He stared at her.

"No such place here," he answered.

An elder man standing within earshot raised his head, and listened.

"But there was. This is Belle Sauvage Yard ; and I stopped at the Belle Sauvage Inn when I was last in London."

The elder man looked at her sympathetically, and said :

"It must have been a good while since you were in London."

"Yes. This day fifty years I was married. This is the day of my golden wedding, and I wish to find the inn."

"Pulled down years ago," said the man sadly. Then he added suddenly, as he sprang over the counter of the railway booking-office, and raised the widow of the old coach-proprietor from the ground: "She has fainted."

She had not fainted. They all agreed ~~she~~ had died of syncope of the heart's action from shock.

She had gone to celebrate her golden wedding in the realms of the imperishable.

THE
MYSTERIOUS SPECULATOR

THE
MYSTERIOUS SPECULATOR.

"ANOTHER shilling to-day! Wheat is lively this year." •

"Ay. Brown and Thompson have forty thousand quarters afloat. They'll realise something by it if matters keep on like this."

"This kind of thing makes business look wholesome. Give me jumps of any kind rather than the same prices in the lists from month to month."

"I'm not so wild as that. I like to know what I'm doing."

"I confess I don't. I prefer letting luck do my business."

"You were born for the Stock Exchange, Garston."

"Wish I had been brought up to it. But what's the use of wishing? Is anyone going to have luncheon? I'm famished."

"Here comes old Parker. Wonder why he isn't in this year? He's been in when things were dead against him and all of us; and now he won't touch stuff when there's a chance of pulling back the two bad years."

"But he always was an odd-fellow—always."

"What's he doing with that place of his? I'm told a sack of wheat or corn wasn't seen in it this year."

"Well, not many, any way."

"Poor old fellow, he's beginning to get very weak at the knees."

"Ah yes. But he's over seventy a good bit."

"He must be seventy-five."

"Or thereabouts."

A tall, bent, white-haired old man passed the

group, saluting the speakers as he went by. He had once been a very fine man, six feet at least, and broad and shapely. But now he drooped heavily, his shoulders hung forward over his chest, and he glided rather than walked.

For many years this man, William Parker by name, had been one of the leading importers of corn and wheat in the city of Watsley. He held a large store in a by-street off the quay, and had employed a great number of men. All at once, at the beginning of the year in which the conversation reported occurred on the steps of the Watsley Chamber of Commerce, William Parker gave up the corn trade. He discharged his labourers and clerks, and without issuing a circular to his friends, he took no notice of their correspondence. He had been a man of singular habits; silent, mysterious, unsocial. No one in the city had ever eaten or drunk with him. He and his wife lived buried away from the world in a small secluded suburban house. There was but one domestic servant, an old gap-toothed woman, who,

it was reported, had nursed Mrs. Parker, and had never been separated from the lady since that time. Mrs. Parker, a mild, gentle, slender, delicate woman, was much addicted to prayer and monotonous goodness of nature. By force of long habit she had separated herself almost as thoroughly from the world as if the end of her prayers had been reached. She was not a native of Watsley, and many said that she was Mr. Parker's social inferior. At all events, they never went into society ; and, having no children, were almost forgotten as inhabitants of the suburb.

Whatever may have been the origin of Mrs. Parker, she regarded her husband with the most unlimited respect, not unmingled with fear. She looked up to him as an oracle, and would have denied the evidence of her senses if his word were against it. One of the most remarkable things about Mr. Parker was that, although no one had ever seen him in a passion or known him to be harsh or unreasonable, still everyone brought close to him stood in a kind of fear. He had an absent-

minded way of forgetting the presence of others, and this in no small degree impressed his household and business servants with a kind of awe. Added to this was a taciturnity of the most rigid character. He often spent hours without once speaking although people were near, and frequently Mrs. Parker had known him to come home after business and return to it the next morning in silence.

He and his wife lived in a simple, not to say penurious, manner. "Why, his own clerks are better clad," someone said on the Chamber of Commerce steps.

"He must have a lot of money."

"You may swear that."

"What do you think he's worth dry?"

"Thirty."

"Thirty thousand! Nearer a hundred thousand, I should think. All in foreign securities."

"And then his business taken with and with can't be less than three to four thousand a-year."

"That at least."

"Odd fish!"

“Very.”

And in the warmth of the August sunlight the men canvassed the old man as he walked down the street.

There was much speculation in Watsley concerning what old Parker would do with his money. As far as was known, he had not a single relative but his wife. No doubt he'd leave her a life-interest in the bulk of his fortune, and most probably bequeath the reversion to a charitable institution. Perhaps he'd found an hospital, or will his savings for the purchase of a park. He was growing old, and had secured more than ever he could use, so that he was wise to give up business. But why did he keep on the store? The rent must be considerable, and now it was plain he did not intend pursuing trade further. But wasn't it strange he had never tried to sell the business? It would have fetched a handsome sum, and what a pity to see a trade formed so carefully through many years dispersed for mere want of someone willing to carry it on ; and with


what scant courtesy he had treated his old friends and dealers !

As the weeks slipped away a change was noticed in the old man. He had always been in the habit of taking luncheon at a restaurant frequented by the merchants of the city ; now he went there no more. Throughout the day he sat in a little back office reading newspapers and writing letters. He had always kept so much aloof that few men went near him now, but those who did always found him poring over a newspaper through his silver-rimmed spectacles, or bent at his desk letter-writing.

"What on earth can old Parker be always poking after in that dingy hole of an office ?"

"No ones knows. He doesn't send any circulars or letters now to his old customers. I know several of them, and for all they get from him they say he might as well be in his grave."

"Well, since he has nothing to sell, I don't see . any great use in sending circulars, or writing letters offering it ?"



"It's an age since I saw him lunching at Morrison's. Has he given up eating as well as business?"

"Ha-ha-ha! He's stingy enough to try it. What a fool a man is to go on hoarding like that and denying himself the comforts of life!"

"By-the-bye, talking of eating, Garston told me he went in a week or two ago and found the old miser toasting a piece of cheese over a slice of bread. Just fancy that!"

"What o'clock was that at?" demanded Ned Plummer, one of the greatest humourists of Watsley.

"About half-past one."

"Look here, by Jove, it must be fun to see the old fellow feed. I'll drop in on him to-morrow. I'll ask a question about something or other."

"Short answer you'll get."


At the time named Ned Plummer next day strolled with a thoughtful air into Mr. Parker's store. It was close to the end of September and very cold. The old man was seated at a

small fire ; his head thrown back, his eyes fixed abstractedly on the fire, his hands resting on his knees, his shrunken chest thrust forward. On the desk behind him lay several newspapers.

So deep was the old man's reverie that he did not notice Ned's entry. The young man stood behind his chair for a moment. Mr. Parker muttered aloud :

" I'll have two hundred more of those Bolivians and four hundred Great Western. That will be, let me see, let me see. . . . Well, never mind ; it's all right. Even if I can't do anything better with them, and I know I can, I'll keep them. The Bolivians are sure to come right."

This was somehow out of key with the spirit of Ned Plummer's visit, although there appeared almost a ludicrous contrast between such transactions and toasting a pennyworth of cheese to flavour a roll. Ned Plummer had inadvertently made a discovery which went far to explain away Mr. Parker's recent actions, and which at the same time rather dulled the edge of Ned Plummer's



humour by disclosing the easy way this old man handled large sums of money. An idea occurred to him by following which he might get further into the secrets.

"Good-day, Mr. Parker," he said briskly, at the same time moving his feet as though he had but just come in.

The old man did not hear, he sat still gazing into the fire.

"Good-day, Mr. Parker," repeated Plummer in a louder voice.

Mr. Parker slowly turned his head round, looked at the speaker with a dull, lack-lustre, introspective eye, and muttered mechanically: "Good-day." It was quite plain he did not recognise his visitor. The image of the young man was in his brain, but the brain did nothing with the guest who entered through the eyes. No sooner had he spoken than he fixed his glance once more on the fire.

Plummer shuffled his feet to try and arouse him, and said: "Mr. Parker, I have a few hundred

pounds to invest, and as I know you are well acquainted with all the good things going, I thought I'd take the liberty of asking you what would be best."

During the course of this speech the sitting man stood up and confronted the other. All vagueness and uncertainty had left his eyes, and instead of the dull gaze there was a quick sharp glitter in them.

"Yes, young Plummer, you did quite right to come to me, and my best advice is at your service. I do happen to know something about the markets."

"It's only three hundred, but I may as well have it in a safe thing; and a good thing as well."

"Certainly; and I can put you in the way of it." He spoke with cordiality and animation.

"You do a great deal in that way?"


The old man smiled a deprecatory smile, shook his head playfully, and whispered: "Yes, a little."

“By Jove,” thought the young man, “but old Parker is altered! Why, he’s quite sociable and friendly. What can be the matter? He must be making money like slates.” Then he said aloud: “And I suppose you find it to do pretty well?”

“Do!” he exclaimed with enthusiasm, drawing himself up to his greatest height. “Do! Why, young Plummer, alchemy need never be thought of now! There is the Stock Exchange. Just look here.” He produced from a drawer a number of slips of paper. Each slip contained an account for one week. The figures were enormous, and young Plummer ran them down with something approaching dread.

Mr. Parker went on: “My transactions last month reached to a total of one million two hundred and four thousand six hundred and forty-nine pounds fourteen and tenpence.”


The young man stood aghast. His imagination was appalled by the enormity of these figures. He waited for the other to speak again.



"The net profit after deducting all losses and charges was not contemptible. I made two thousand three hundred and six pounds one and sevenpence, as you may see on examination."

"Suppose, sir, I were to place my few hundreds in your hands, would you be kind enough to invest them for me? You are familiar with such matters, and I know nothing about them." When Plummer had spoken first of investing money, he had no intention of doing anything of the kind. But the splendours now revealed to him completely dazzled his eyes. "Of course," he thought, "I couldn't ask him to speculate for me with my money; that would be too much." Thus, he who had come "to scoff remained to pray."

"I shall be most happy indeed, my young friend. There is nothing would give me more pleasure. I knew your father well: a most upright and honourable trader, and my services in such matters may be fully relied on by his son."



Wonder on wonders ! Not only had the dull silent old man told all about his business, but, moreover, offered to do his best for one who had comparatively a slight knowledge of him ; what miracle had been wrought in his nature ! Had success changed a silent, isolated, abstracted man into an enthusiast overflowing with anxiety to befriend ? Here was the discoverer of the philosopher's stone keeping it no secret, but expounding and sharing it as freely as if it were air.


Ned Plummer went away like one in a dream. Without being conscious of the turns he was taking, he drifted towards the Chamber of Commerce, on the steps of which he found Garston and others.

"Well, did you see the old fellow at his bun and cheese ?"

"No."

"You are usually a lucky fellow, Plummer ; how do you account for your misfortune ?"

"He is immensely connected with stock speculations."



"Ah! Is that it? We always thought there was something of that kind on."

"And he was as cordial and friendly with me as if I were his own son. So changed a man I never met. I didn't think a miracle could do it."

Ned Plummer then related all that had passed. His listeners were for awhile incredulous, but at length they began to see he was quite serious and truthful; and when the little after-luncheon gossip was concluded, the men went away somewhat depressed by the history of their neighbour's good fortune.

Next day young Plummer brought the money.

They had a long conversation, in the course of which the old man went further into details of gigantic operations. One thing struck young Plummer as peculiar. With all this vast buying and selling, telegraph boys never entered that store. He was now on such familiar terms with the speculator that he felt he might put a question without risk.

"You use the wires a good deal?"

“No, never.”

“Never!”

“Never.” He rose with a smile and drew a huge roll of paper from a drawer. Before unfolding it he said: “It is only the tyro who is not aware of what is going to happen until it is necessary to use the wires. The man who cannot see clearly four-and-twenty hours ahead has no business to risk a sixpence. Unless you can gauge the consequence of remote causes, keep away from the brokers.” He spread out the paper. It was as large as a sea-chart, and presented the appearance of the plan of a battle. At the top were parallelograms of red ink, characterised by initial capital letters. From these parallelograms hung a number of black ink lines, not parallel to one another but waving, now this way now the other, and not all the one way. On the left and right margins of the paper there were dates, and inside the dates words.

“You see,” the old man explained, pointing to the red marks and the initials, “these are the various kinds of stock; the lines represent the

course of variations, those to the right indicating an upward tendency, those to the left a decline. The dates on the left-hand side are of the day present, the dates on the right, of the next day to that one on which the continuation of the line to the date on the left is made. Thus the right is always twenty-four hours in advance of the left, that is at morning. The words on the left show events which absolutely influenced the market that day ; the words on the right those in the future which I calculate upon influencing the market on the next day. If you look closely you will see that in no single instance have I made an important false anticipation. That is the way I work."


While Mr. Parker exhibited and expounded the chart there was almost a feverish anxiety in his earnestness. His whole soul seemed centred on the pages.

The young man looked in awe at the singular engine by which almost a million and a quarter had been played with in the course of a single

month. He felt stupefied and dull, and ran his finger down the margins, reading the words as though they were in a tongue but little known to him. When his eyes reached the end of the left-hand column, he glanced across the sheet to observe the predictions for the next day. A moment he seemed at a loss ; passed his finger from the date across the horizontal lines, and then looked up, saying in a tone of respectful inquiry :

“Mr. Parker, you will excuse my remarking it, such enormous sums may depend on it, but you have not posted the fluctuations for to-morrow ? ”

The old man started, and, fixing his spectacles on his nose, looked. “Bless my soul ! ” he cried hastily, and with a slight tinge of colour in his pale thin cheeks and an obvious trembling of the hands. “You are quite right. In my anxiety to arrange my own transactions for to-morrow, I quite forgot. But I have it all so clearly in my head that I fancy I see it before me. I had better put it down at once. Give me the money, and I shall make this all right in half-an-hour.”



The young man handed him the money, and retired.

When William Parker was alone he closed the door of his office, and began striding up and down in great excitement. He passed his hand through his thin white hair. Inflating his chest, he threw back his shoulders and looked proudly around. His eyes shone brightly, and his whole air was that of a man who after a long struggle with fate had triumphed at last.

"Ha!" he muttered exultingly, "my system vindicates itself! People begin to see how simple a discovery has reduced stock-jobbing to a certainty. I shall write to the newspapers about my invention. I don't want to monopolise. Only for the excitement, I should not touch another speculation. I'd realise all doubtful or purely speculative ventures and lock up safely in mortgages on land, or in Consols, or something of that kind. But I must have matter to employ my mind. It won't do for me to sit brooding all day. I've been too much given to that kind

of thing, and it won't do to go on brooding now. No, no!"

The latter portion of this speech was uttered in a tone of half-anger half-fear, and at the last two words he shook his fist in a threatening manner.


After a moment's silence he continued more calmly:

"I'll turn over a new leaf. That's what I must do. I'm too much isolated. I'm too lonely. I've been all my life eating my heart away with this thinking, and now I'm grown old and require a little relaxation. Besides, I know people will welcome the inventor of the great key to success on the Stock Exchange. They are sure to want to see me. I'll turn over a new leaf and go about more. There is no good in my keeping this place on. I'll give it up. I can do all my writing at home, and maybe towards the end of this year I'll withdraw altogether from money transactions. But here's young Plummer's three hundred—that must be invested. I must write

this afternoon. I may as well do it now. Let me see ; let me see."

He placed his open palm on his forehead and stood awhile in thought. Then sitting down he resumed his soliloquy while arranging his papers. "The best thing for this young man is three of the New Amalgamated Discounting Company's. They're now at 98 and are sure to be 105 before three months. I'll get him three of them. I can't help liking that young man, and I'll do my utmost for him both now and at any other time he may want me ; he was the first to ask my advice and behold my system, and I shall always look on him as the most intelligent man in Watsley."

On his way home that evening he was in such excellent spirits that he stopped and spoke to two or three men he knew, and acquainted them with his intention of giving up his store, and resting himself from all business cares. With the most friendly frankness, he informed each that he had been a heavy and successful speculator




on the Stock Exchange, and that, as he had done so well, and did not wish to be much longer burdened with the great weight of thought, he would most likely in a few more months abandon jobbing altogether.

All whom he had spoken to were astonished at his unusual loquacity, and each agreed that old Parker had talked more to him than in a month of any previous time. Success improves some men, they said, and here was an instance.

When he got home he informed his wife of all his new resolutions, and, furthermore, that he contemplated altering their establishment and living in a manner more suited to their fortunes. Then for the first time in all his life he went into details of his financial affairs, until his wife stared with amazement.

She fell to wondering later why he had hoarded all this money, and lived so meanly. They had no child to leave it to. Of late he had been more penurious than ever, and the very




evening that he told her he owned absolutely more than half a million sterling there was not a single shilling in her possession, and a better dinner than she had been able to provide might easily be found in the house of an artisan.

At night she lay awake thinking of all his wealth, and sadly lamenting they had no child or grandchild to whom they might leave it. They were now both old; the period of enjoyment was passed, and in the decline of life, towards the limit of that decline, they had become so enormously rich that she could form no conception of the sum. Oh that one child had been given to them! But now all this wealth would go among strangers, whose hearts were barren of love for them, whom they had never loved.

Next morning Parker seemed in even better spirits. There was a tinge of colour in his pale cheek and a great brightness in his eyes.

"Do you know, my dear," he said to his wife, as they sat at breakfast, "I have decided




on delaying no longer to show my friends my plan of operating on the Exchange, and I purpose taking the plan with me to-day to the Chamber and explaining it to them."

As he went out, his wife, to her intense astonishment, heard him hum an air.

He hastened to his office and remained there till noon. Then, taking out his chart, he proceeded with it under his arm to the Chamber of Commerce, and walked into the reading-room.

The Chamber of Commerce in Watsley is situated in a street running parallel to the quay, and as the quay is very wide and only a few yards distant and more pleasant, the street has no great traffic. At noon most of the merchants of the city found their way to the Chamber, for then the second supply of telegrams came. Old Mr. Parker never missed noon at the Chamber, and consequently his arrival caused no surprise. But some looked at the huge roll of papers, and the flush in the cheek and the brightness in the eyes.



The old man awaited his opportunity with a little impatience. The telegrams at length appeared, were read, discussed, and blessed or cursed. Then, just as the talk about them was flagging, the old white-haired man stepped up to a table in the centre of the room and unrolled his chart, saying, in a full firm voice :

“Gentlemen, will you allow me to show you an invention of mine by which I govern my speculations on the Stock Exchange?”

“Hallo, Fennes, back from the sea? Hope you enjoyed it?”

“Oh yes, very much indeed, thank you. We had such lovely weather. What news since?”

“I suppose you heard of poor old Parker?”

“I saw only a short account in the paper. Tell me all about it.”

“Well, you see, he never was so rich a man as we thought him, and the last two bad years stranded him altogether. As you know, he always paid cash and got cash; he was working very

neatly, and was cleaned out, with a swept floor, last January, both for stock and cash. This acted on his mind to such a degree that it turned it. He used to write letters and put them into a safe. These letters were all addressed to a London stockbroker, and made believe to buy and sell enormous quantities of stocks and shares ; but there really never had been any purchase or sale at all. You must know young Plummer went one day into the store and heard him talking to himself about large transactions. He asked him to invest some few hundreds for him. The poor old fellow promised, and next day showed him a plan or chart by which he said he guided his speculations. Well, the day after he walked into the Chamber with this chart, and spread it out on the table. We all noticed his bright eyes and flushed cheeks, and whispered how well he was looking. Just before beginning to explain about the chart, he looked up and said : 'Gentlemen, in my old days I am going to put on the new man and turn over a new leaf!'

"The words were hardly out of his mouth when he bent forward and fell flat on the table. We sent for doctors, but they said he was dead."

"Poor old Parker! I'm really very sorry; it's enough to make a man quite melancholy. What of Plummer's money?"

"Oh, that was all right. The poor old fellow was loyal, and sent off the money; Plummer has the value, and everyone thinks they're a good investment. The doctors said that having had so many imaginary dealings and no real one, and a real one coming at last, made the old fellow mad altogether, and brought about his sudden death."

"No doubt—no doubt. Poor old fellow! we'll miss him."



THE
DAUGHTER OF THE DARK



THE
DAUGHTER OF THE DARK.

ON the 21st of February, 1857, Michael Grame, being then twenty-eight years of age, married, and an engine-driver by trade, met with an accident whereby he was permanently disabled. As he was taking his engine out of the shed in the morning a pipe burst, a fragment of the pipe struck his left knee with such violence that when discharged from hospital he limped out with a stiff leg, and carried the assurance that his knee would be stiff all his life. The steam had so scalded the right side of his face that cheek, forehead, and chin were deeply scarred, and, worst of all, the right eye was so injured that the orb

had to be removed. After the accident a flaw was discovered in the pipe which had burst. Several complaints had been made of the engine before; the locomotive superintendent was to blame, and through him the company. So, upon Michael Grame signing a document discharging the company of all further responsibility with regard to himself and this accident, they handed his solicitor a cheque for four-hundred-and-fifty pounds as compensation for the injury sustained by him.

The accident was a very sad one, and awoke a good deal of pity for Michael Grame. He had been married just a year to the young daughter of a small shopkeeper in a little Devonshire town. She was still short of twenty. They were both young, and by-and-by there would be, the neighbours and friends said sympathetically, still younger beings looking to them for bread, and here were his trade and his strength taken from him in one moment, and at such an important period of his life. If the accident had occurred before his

marriage, or when his future family were grown up and in the way of doing for themselves, it would be so much easier to bear. Death would have been preferable. That would have left his wife free, with four-hundred-and-fifty pounds, if not more, in hand, and no dread of future responsibilities. What good was four-hundred-and-fifty pounds to them as they were? Neither had the least faculty for business, or knowledge of it. Supposing no children came, the money might last them seven years; but in seven years he would be no more than in middle life, and she still young, and then what should they do?

Much talk took place among the neighbours and friends. In the end a further sum of seventy pounds reached them: fifty from a friendly society, and twenty the result of a subscription among the engine-drivers and stokers of the company.

Michael Grame took advice of the secretary of the Independent Metropolitan Engine-Drivers' Association, and invested five hundred pounds in an annuity for his wife's life. Thus he was

sure they would have forty pounds a-year during their joint lives and she the same during her life, should he die first. He could get no more than thirty pounds a-year on the two lives, and, as he put it: "Thirty pounds is neither here nor there for two people, but forty is something. It's queer if after a bit I can't make a few shillings to keep myself and any little ones God may send us, and she'll have all the more for herself and them if I go first."


When 1877 came round it found Michael Grame's worldly affairs much improved. He was now forty-eight years of age, still childless, and paid secretary of the Independent Metropolitan Engine-Drivers' Association. Before the accident which made him blind of one eye and lame he had been clever and popular among his fellows. As the years went on he had developed and improved mentally, and had gathered to himself the admiration and confidence of the men around him. So that in 1873, the secretary dying, he got the secretaryship with a weekly salary of three pounds.

In 1877 there was no secretary of any branch of a trades' union in London more trusted or respected than Michael Grame. He was low-sized, keen, energetic, pale, slight, light-bearded, and bent. Over the cavity beneath the right eyebrow he wore a black glass to conceal the unpleasant void. Over the other eye he wore an ordinary convex clear glass, for already he was growing long-sighted in the remaining eye. The dark patch made by the one black glass lent his countenance a grotesque and whimsical appearance. Even those who knew him best and were in the habit of meeting him daily could never fully divest their minds of the idea that the spectacles with the odd glasses were assumed for a joke, and that sooner or later Michael Grame would indicate the way in which the joke lay. When strangers met him they were always inclined to laugh, and generally did smile, at the deliberate comicality of his face.

But Michael Grame's joke never came, his face never relaxed. In all London it would be

hard to find one man whose views of life and things were so sincerely grave. In his youth he had been ardent and melancholic. His dreadful accident and years had tended to discipline his enthusiasm. He was religious without using any special forms of religion, puritanical without a code, sincere out of his natural temperament, and grave out of an unformulated theory that men who are not grave must be rascals.

For a man of his position and opportunities he was well informed. In speech and manner he was thoughtful and prudent. Now and then the fiery ardour of a reformer would break out in him, and for a few moments he would fill his listening fellows with wonder, and send them away mentally reeling under the weight of some startling novelty in thought. He would sit still and talk most cautiously for an hour, then all at once, and just before departing, fling out some tremendous principle, or suggestion, or doubt, and then retire, leaving his astonished fellows gasping in the presence of some revolutionary principle which



seemed to threaten all order that was, and to leave society once more in the chaos of barbarism.

From the day of his appointment as secretary to the Independent Metropolitan Engine-Drivers' Association the influence of this man spread and grew. Incapacitated himself from labour, and yet closely allied to his old companions, his whole soul went into the work at his feet.

The duties of his office absorbed only a drop in the ocean of his activity. Hither and thither he wandered, among others of his kind, and those who, though not of his kind, were still allied to the branch of labour he represented. He was an apostle of progress and preached the nobility of the future.

During the years intervening between 1857 and 1873 he had led a restless and unsettled life, now trying one thing, now another ; succeeding in picking up a few shillings a-week, and giving all his spare time to reading in the line of his favourite study. All the sincerity of his nature had been wrapped up in the circle of his reading. No

natural outlet presented itself to the enthusiasm of his nature. Like an internal fire of earth, he was always wandering about in search of some vent for his pent-up activity, and never finding any more capacious crater than a fierce shout of approval at democratic sentiments uttered in speeches by popular leaders, or his own furious and somewhat incoherent attacks upon the system then governing the regulation of labour. He did not side exactly with the republican element of the country. He did not care in the least what the form of government was, so long as the hard-working honest man got his rights. He was anti-employer and not anti-king; he had the most complete belief in his own theory, the most sincere conviction that he was right and all opposed to him not only wrong but wickedly and stubbornly wrong—wrong to the ruin of the individual, the country, and the vital principle of the Christian creed.

Once invested with influence and power as secretary to the Independent Metropolitan Engine-

Drivers' Association, he found it necessary to curb the violence of his feelings for fear of causing mischief to others, and out of a belief that his words would largely and perhaps injuriously affect the acts and fortunes of those around him, since to his words would be affixed a semi-official value, and he would seem to speak with the authority of the society.

Early in the October of 1877 Michael Grame became gradually busier and busier day by day, until his home saw little or nothing of him from early morning till late at night. He lived in one of the houses in that long road on the west side of the London, Chatham, and Dover Railway, between Herne Hill and Coldharbour Lane.


His absence from home at this time was particularly trying to his wife, for, although still childless, there was at last, to the great joy of himself and his wife, Helen, the prospect of a change in this state of things.

Mrs. Grame was very far from strong, and those around her felt most anxious about her.

Her married sister had promised to come a little later on, but up to the early part of October the household of the Grames consisted of Grame, his wife, and a young servant-girl not more than seventeen years of age, named Emily.

It was very hard upon Mrs. Grame to sit up, often until after midnight, for him ; nothing could persuade her to go to bed before he had shut up the house for the night. To sit up for him had been a habit of twenty years, and she could not put it away now, although it sorely taxed her strength. What added to the difficulties of her position, and gave her anxiety of mind to increase her distress of body, was that for the first time in all their married life he had placed a limit to his confidences.

When he came back late he made vague replies. When he went out early he made vague excuses. Of nights he said merely he "could not get back earlier," or "business kept him." Of mornings he "wanted to be off early," he "had a day full of work," before him.



Once when he came home later that usual, she, being weak and full of disquietude on account of him, reproached him with growing weary of an ailing wife.

He went to her and sat down beside her and took her hand and stroked it softly. He pushed back the thin black hair from the faded weak face, and taking the face softly between his hands, kissed it, saying very gently but very firmly :

"To-night I was at the London Gas Stokers' Society, and they kept me very late, for the thing is of importance, and I am doing most of the work."

"What thing? What is of importance?"

"It is a secret. I must not tell even you. I am arranging it all with them—with the committees and secretaries. We are all bound to keep the matter private even from our wives."

"Then it must be a thing of no good—no good for the wives, any way."


"Yes, it will be good for all working-men and their wives and families and fortunes; and"

(he rose and drew himself up to the full height of his stunted figure) "it was *I* first thought of it; *I*, I tell you, *I*, Michael Grame, your husband, am organising it. Do you hear that, Helen?"

"The what?" she asked quickly, trying to take him off his guard.

"The——" He paused in time, and looked at her half-angrily half-reproachfully. The enthusiasm of the man had been kindled as he spoke, and his imagination had almost betrayed him into forgetting his pledge. He turned to her sharply and said: "Go to bed. You must not wait up again. I shall be busier and busier and busier as the time for the Grand Stroke comes on. You must sit up no more."

In a reverie, and quite ignoring her presence, he continued—his one eye burning and fixed on space, the gaslight shining on the black glass over the vacant socket, and through the darkened glass a pool of livid shadow striking on his hollow cheek amid the scanty growth of grizzling hairs: "We have them all now, all we want—



the Gas Stokers, the Horse Drivers, the Postal Telegraph, the River Craft, the Wapping Seafarers. All! all!"

He was not addressing his wife. He was under no delusion that he spoke to one of the meetings. He was simply reviewing for his personal gratification some fragment of his own creation and ordering. He continued:


"I got them together. I brought them to see something was needed. Then I told them of the scheme I have had so long in my head. At first they were frightened and held back. But I worked on and spoke and spoke and spoke until they listened. And now it is going to be as I designed it. Do you hear that?"

He brought down his hand with such violence on the table that Mrs. Grame uttered a low cry of surprise. Turning almost furiously upon her he shouted: "Good heavens, woman, are you there still! Did I not tell you to go to bed?"

She rose and crept from the room and went to bed in the dark. She lay thinking long before

she could sleep. While she lay awake she was afraid to cry, lest he might hear her sobs and come up; afraid to weep, lest when he came he might see her tears. At last she fell asleep; her reason no longer held back her tears, and they burst through her lids. And later still she sobbed in her sleep. He heard her, and came up softly and held a candle above her face, and listened and watched until he knew she slept. Then he blew out the candle, put it on the table, and throwing up his hands towards heaven whispered, through his set teeth: "My God! can I have let the secret slip? if so, all is lost!"

Next morning his wife was stirring before he awoke. When he came down she looked careworn and haggard. She moved about him with fear and a clinging solicitude. She watched every movement of his as though he were a child walking among sleeping snakes. At last when he was about to leave, he turned to her and said:



"Helen, I was talking aloud before I went upstairs last night. It's a foolish habit and a bad one. I was greatly excited and worn out. Did I then tell you what I am organising?"

"No," in a faint tremulous tone.

"Because I came up and found you sobbing in your sleep."

"I was only frightened; I do not know what is going to happen, but I fear something dreadful. Won't you keep out of it for my sake—for the sake of——"

"Hush! Good-morning, Helen; take care of yourself. I'll try and be in early to-night. Not a word of all this to anyone, mind! I rely on you to hold your tongue." And he was gone.

That evening he did return sooner than usual, and made exceptional efforts to be soothing and interesting. When eleven o'clock came he said to her: "I am in to-night, and it's quite time you were in bed. Go."

She took a candle up. He went to her and

put his right arm round her and kissed her. "Helen, I hope you will sleep well to-night: no more sobbing. There is nothing to be afraid of; you may be quite sure of that. We must have your sister as soon as ever she can come to keep you company. Do you know you sobbed so loud in your sleep last night that I heard you down here quite distinctly. Do I speak now often in my sleep as I used long ago?"

"Not often."

"But when I do I make long speeches, as if I was at a meeting, like I used always?"


"Oh no, not so long as that."

"I know, not so long; but as sensible, as well put together? I mean with sense, you know?"

"Yes, quite sensible."

"Well, good-night now. Go to sleep soon; and mind, no fretting to-night."

She went to bed, but her sleep was light and broken. She woke, and while she lay awake one o'clock struck. He had not come up yet. She



dozed again. Once more she woke. Still he had not come up. She lay a long while fearing, trembling. Four o'clock struck. Four o'clock, and he not come up yet! There must be something wrong.

Pale and half-sick with dread, she got up, lighted a candle, threw a shawl round her, opened the door, and descended the stairs.

All was still in the house, but from the sitting-room where she had left her husband, came the low murmur of a human voice—the voice of her husband.

She stooped down and looked in at the keyhole. The light was out. She put her ear to the keyhole. Yes—the slow speech, the thick articulation, the end of sentences in disorder. He was speaking in his sleep.

She became alarmed. Why had he gone to sleep there? Why had he not come up to bed?

She turned the handle and entered the room. Shading the light with her hand she advanced. All in the room was as she had left it, except that

a chair had been turned feet up on the hearthrug, and a pillow taken from the easy-chair and placed upon the slanting back of the chair. With his head on this pillow, and his body covered with a travelling-rug, lay Michael Grame asleep, and speaking softly in his sleep.

The woman held the candle high aloft, but on one side, so that the light might not fall upon the face of her husband. He lay on his back ; he had removed his spectacles, and his thin worn face looked all the more cadaverous for the loss of the motley glasses. His brows were knit, his cheeks pinched, and his lips drawn closely across his teeth.

For a moment he remains silent. Then, with a slight tremor and a painful twitch of all the features, the lips come together, and he begins speaking again with a thick tongue.

She can hear every word. The words have a terrible effect on her. She bends forward, thrusts the candle as far as she can behind her and remains fixed as the sculpture on a tomb.

Gradually as she listens her mouth opens, her

teeth protrude, her eyebrows creep up her forehead, her eyes become fixed and staring. She seems transfixed by terror.

He ceases to speak. His mouth closes, a smile of triumph comes over his face. She knows his habits. He will fall into a profound and quiet sleep now. She straightens herself slowly and as though her joints were half-frozen, blows out the candle, crawls out of the room, shutting the door softly after her, and steals silently upstairs and into bed.


She covers up her head. She feels she must speak or die. "Have mercy on my husband," she prays, "have mercy on my husband, and have pity on me and—my child!"

It is daylight before she uncovers her head. She looks around cautiously, and then fearfully covers up her head again. He has not come up yet. She shivers and moans softly, but does not weep—utters no word. She has not slept since; she does not sleep now. At seven o'clock she hears a foot on the stairs, the handle of the door

turns, and she knows he is in the room. She affects to be asleep. He looks at the bed, sees that her head is covered, and seems disturbed at this. He approaches and turns down the counterpane. She affects to awake, and looks up. He regards her with doubt and disturbance.

"You dressed very quietly, Michael," she says, trying to force a smile. "I did not hear you dressing."

"How long have you been awake?" apparently taking little interest in the question, so little interest that he does not seem to care whether she answers or not. Then he notices that his pillow is untossed, his night-shirt still folded. For a moment he is in a rage that he did not steal up while she slept and rumple the pillow and unfold the shirt, so that it might seem to her he had come to bed late while she was sleeping, and had risen early before she was awake. In another moment he thinks: "She cannot but have noticed the pillow. She is looking at it now. Why does she make no remark?"



Suddenly a thought breaks in upon him, and he seems rooted to the spot. Why did she look so scared? The night before he had heard her sobbing in her bed while he was in the room downstairs. Could he have spoken in his sleep last night—she heard him, come down and listened, as he had gone up and listened?

"Helen," he says, without moving a limb, "do you know where I slept last night?"

"Oh Michael!"

"Answer me, woman—answer me, do you hear?"

"Yes, Michael."

"You came down and heard me speak, and are afraid?"

"Michael, for the sake of me and your unborn child——"

"Stop, don't stir till I come back. Do you hear me, woman?"

He leaves the room. With lips still parted, as when his words had broken in upon her piteous appeal, she lies breathing heavily, her eyes staring

and fixed, and seemingly kept open by no other force than a wild final curiosity to see the means by which they are to be closed up for ever.

She does not speak with her lips, but the voice of her dread is loud in her ears. "When he comes back he will kill—us."

She lies awhile breathing heavily. At length she hears his tread upon the stairs. She does not think of praying; she will think only of him just now, until the fatal blow is struck. Then she will close her eyes on him and the world, and, taking the spirit of the child by the hand, set out for the gardens of eternal summer, where she shall see her own playing with the others in the shade; there, in the eternal groves, to guard their child, to pass away the period of her widowhood, until in after ages he comes to her and tells his sorrow, and asks her pardon for this blow.

He is at her bedside once more. She does not move her eyes. She knows what is coming and all her curiosity is gone.

"Helen"—his voice is very grave and solemn

—"give me your right hand." She does so, and he places it on something cold and smooth. He continues: "Your hand is now on the Book. Swear to me that, no matter what you heard last night—I do not want you to tell me what it was—but swear to me with your hand on the Book that to living being you will never breathe what you heard. Swear that. If you don't swear and keep your oath you will ruin the great object of my life."

"But murder will come of what you spoke about last night, and they will hang you. Hang my Michael, and *now* !"


"Swear, I say, woman, and swear at once. I can stay no longer. I have business away from this. Swear, I say."

"I swear."

"Kiss the Book. That will do. Now I must go. Remember : not a word. Your sister, Jane Ilford, will be here to-morrow. I shall be late to-night. Remember your oath, Helen Grame." And he is gone.


When she is alone, she lies half-stunned. He has not struck that blow, and yet she feels half-dead already. She would have preferred the blow, the complete oblivion, and then the watching of the child in the gardens of eternal summer until he came once more with sorrow and with love.

This day was Thursday, the 11th of October, 1877. It was a very busy day indeed with Michael Grame. As he had said in his speech addressed to vacancy, but spoken in the presence of his wife, they had all now come into his view, and were prepared to act upon his advice in his master-stroke against capital. He had for months been elaborately preparing for the great event, an event which would form an era in the history of labour writhing under the tyranny of capital. No such terrible lesson had ever been dealt to insolent employers, unprincipled masters, as he had prepared for them. When his blow fell it would not fall upon one trade, one branch of industry alone, but, like an Egyptian plague, upon millions of people. So splendid and complete a scheme



had never in the history of man been designed or executed. It was a double-edged sword ; it would wound the employers and the public at the one blow. It would not only show the employers that they depend solely upon the honest sons of toil, but prove to the selfish public that the working-men command the situation, and can mar or make the whole community by one concerted act.

All the great efforts of labour against capital had up to this been piecemeal and non-apparent to the consumer. Labour had paltered with capital. Why should this be? Why should not labour act for one week as though capital did not exist? That would show the world—the world not of legislators and political economists and employers, but the whole world, from the prince to the crossing-sweeper—that all the business of the human race, all that was really vital to the existence of the people and the glory of the state, depended not upon this man or that man, this clique or that clique, but upon the



working-man, upon labour. To confederate that labour, and to make it speak in a voice which the rudest and the most refined could understand, had been the dream of his life; and now, at last, after years of thought and care, and months of ceaseless labour day and night, he, he the poor ex-engine-driver, had the lesson ready. Within three weeks men should read that lesson through dilated eyes. Around four millions of people he would draw his mighty cordon, and to the consternation of four millions and the amazement of the world he would set up the might of labour once and for all, to be a beacon to the oppressed and a warning to the oppressor as long as the history of our days should last.

When two nations, or two parties of the one nation, took up arms against one another and were at war, did the German general send word to the French, did the Confederate announce to the Federal leader : " Sir, I shall attack the heights you occupy on Wednesday " ? " Sir, I shall make a sally in force on Friday night " ? Nothing of

the kind. When the general intended to storm the heights, he made a feint in the plain. When the besieged leader designed a sally, he affected timidity and the airs of capitulation. Then, as soon as each had done all he could to deceive his opponent, he dashed at his object with his whole force. One of the mightiest engines of successful generalship was surprise. Why should the unarmed strife between muscle and money be conducted on different principles? If labour intended to deal a great blow, why should the blow always be preceded by a herald announcing the coming of the blow? The custom was absurd, and it had fallen to his fate to prove to labour the folly of parley.

True, in the course he had advocated, in the course he had compelled, there was risk, fearful risk. In his sleep last night on the hearthrug no doubt he had unfolded to his listening wife the scheme upon which all his faculties were now concentrated. No doubt in that dangerous sleep-talk of his he had adverted to the perils of his plan,


and so terrified his wife. But he had estimated all the risks, calculated all the cost, and decided with mature deliberation. She was only a woman, and because of her sex timid and ignorant of the vastness of the issue he was about to put to the test. But, nothing venture, nothing win. Without risk, without great risk, no great thing was ever gained. No great concession was ever obtained, no great new principle ever established without a hazard of complementary value.

Wrong's difficulty was Right's opportunity. Capital had been in the wrong for years. It had been attacked only in shreds and patches. Let him succeed in his present scheme, and he should not only have capital in a difficulty, but he should have four millions of people at one stroke against capital and with him! No doubt there were various members of the committees, and even a few of the delegates, who thought the people would not without exception take his side. Surely all honest folk would side with him and right against the employers and wrong. Anyway, if they did not

side with him, they could do nothing without him ; he should hold the key of the position, he should be the Napoleon of the hour, and yield he would never until he had ample guarantee of a substantial and enduring redress of grievances.

At the end of Shakespeare Road comes Coldharbour Lane. He turned down Coldharbour Lane and walked on until he came to Loughborough Junction ; here he took the train to the Viaduct. He crossed the Viaduct on foot, descended the Viaduct steps on the northern side and proceeded up Farringdon Street. In Farringdon Street are situated the hall and offices of the Independent Metropolitan Engine - Drivers' Association.

In the course of that day he was visited by the delegates of no fewer than five of the most important branches of labour in London. With each delegate he had a long secret interview. To each he said almost the same words at parting : "We have decided to act on Saturday next three weeks. Let there be no backwardness in your preparations.



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Saturday three weeks without fail. We shall make that day memorable in the history of England. It will be the day from which the emancipation of labour shall date hereafter. All will have to act at five minutes past twelve on the morning of Friday three weeks. We will have a meeting on Thursday previous to the blow. Once the blow is struck we can dictate our terms. God prosper the cause ! ”

On the 12th of October Mrs. Ilford, Mrs. Grame's married sister, arrived at Grame's house, Shakespeare Road, and took up her residence there. This was a great relief to Michael Grame. It seemed to absolve him from the heavier portion of the responsibility in his home affairs. The two sisters occupied the one room, and he now came in so late of nights that he would not disturb them. He admitted himself by latch-key, and crept quietly to bed in a little return-room which had been fitted up for him. In the morning he went into his wife's room after breakfast—she did not get up to breakfast, as the weather was bad. During these visits he always contrived that the

sister should be present, so that any reference to the circumstances of the 11th was impossible.

All this pressed heavily upon the wife. She durst not even hint to her sister at any cause of uneasiness. Her sister was neither lymphatic nor discreet; and if she said anything in her sister's presence that seemed to imply she had cause of mental anxiety, the chances were the matter would in some way get to his ears, and then farewell to confidence and happiness for ever. So the weary time went by, day after day of dull anxiety. She did not know when the plan of her husband was to be put in force, every day it might be to-day: so that she crawled about the house momentarily expecting to hear the shouts of a tumult and see the signs of order broken loose.

On Thursday night, the 1st of November, Michael Grame did not get home until past midnight. He let himself in with his latch-key. His wife, sister-in-law, and servant were in bed. The gas was burning in the bright tidy little hall,



Shakespeare Road was as quiet as a wilderness, save the occasional passing of a late train. Michael Grame carried a bundle, which he deposited on the hall-table. Then going to the return-room he lay down, and was soon asleep. On Friday morning he was up at seven. His sister-in-law came down to give him his breakfast, for he had informed her before leaving for the City on the previous day that he should want to be out of the house by half-past seven on Friday morning. While they were at breakfast he turned to her and said :

“Jane, I have a particular reason for asking—for telling—you not to light any gas in this house from the time I leave until I come back again. Remember, I have a reason for telling you this, and you will tell Helen I told you so, and that it is to be so. I brought a package of candles from town to-day; they are on the hall-table, I left them there last night. Use them instead of gas, until I come back. Mind, until I come back. You will also get in a week’s supply of

everything we want or are likely to want. Here is money. Will that be enough money?"

She took the money and looked at it carefully, curiously, as though she but vaguely comprehended his words. Why did he give such orders? and why did he give such orders to her? was not his wife upstairs? She said merely: "This will be enough for a week. But won't you go up and see Helen before you leave to-day?"

"No. I am not going up. And mark me, it is for her welfare I am doing all this. I am her husband, you are her sister; we are bound to take care of her, and to use our best judgment for her, and I am the judge of what is best; and this is best, and you will do it. She is delicate now, and her very life may be in danger if the thing that is best for her peace and her welfare is not done by us. The whole weight of her life is upon you, Jane, and me. In this matter I take the responsibility of deciding what is best to be done, and upon your head I leave the responsibility of carrying out my decision. Should

she make any remark about the gas, say it is cut off. She is too weak to try, and I accept the responsibility of the lie—if lie there is in this."

His sister-in-law stood staring at him in speechless wonder. She was divided between two dreads, one that her brother-in-law had gone mad, the other that her brother-in-law was still sane. She did not know which to fear most. If there were any sense in what he was saying, what dreadful things were going to happen? if he were suffering from some kind of delusion, what would become of her sister? Anyway, sane or mad, it was better to promise and, moreover, to do what he asked. Anything and everything should be faced to keep the poor feeble woman upstairs quiet. Her only reply was: "Very well, Michael."

"And, Jane, more than all that I have said to you, you are to remember what I am now going to say: If Helen heard from you anything of what I have been telling you it might kill her and her unborn child as dead as though she

were a twelvemonth in her grave. That is all I have to say to you now. I leave you, and I leave her life in your hands—on your head. I shall be very late to-night. I don't know when I may be back. As I told you before, no one is to wait up. I shall go now ; recollect all I have said. I leave her life in your hands—on your head."

With these words he left his house in Shakespeare Road.

Having walked to Loughborough Junction, he took his seat in a train to the Viaduct.

A group of men and a vast mass of business awaited his arrival at the office. It was past noon before he could get himself free for a few moments. Then he stole quickly and quietly out of the office, jumped into a hansom cab, and told the man to drive halfway down Chancery Lane.

He muses : "There is no knowing what may happen, so it is better to draw it out. The fortnight's notice is up to-day. It would not

do to lose it—to lose all I have in the world, now, too, when a little one is coming to us at last.”

The cab pulls up. He alights and walks quickly down a street off Chancery Lane. He enters a large building and presents a paper at a counter. It is marked and returned to him. He presents it at another counter, saying “Gold,” in a low voice. The clerk counts the sum out, weighs it, and shovels it across to him. He counts it, and says: “One hundred and twenty-five; thank you, it’s all right.”

He pours the money into a leather bag, drops the bag into his trousers pocket, and, having left the bank, hails another cab and drives rapidly back to the office in Farringdon Street.

It is now past one in the afternoon.

At three the final meeting of the delegates is to take place at the offices, Farringdon Street. The meeting lasts until five. It is almost stormy, and all Michael Grame’s eloquence and earnestness are necessary to keep the delegates up to the necessary degree of firmness and resolution.

The fact is, contradictory rumours are afloat about an opposition demonstration. As yet these rumours seem no more than idle talk of the timid ; still, they indicate a want of unanimity among the classes concerned.

At half-past five, Michael Grame, having dismissed the delegates, and feeling faint, goes down Farringdon Street, turns up Fleet Street, and enters a tavern. Here he orders a chop and a pint of stout.

"*Globe*, sir," says the waiter, handing him the paper. "*Globe*, sir, special. We're going to have something queer on to-night, sir, if the *Globe* is right. Look there, sir." The man puts his finger on a paragraph as he hands the paper to Michael Grame.

The paragraph runs as follows :

We understand that, owing to discontent among some branches of the industrial classes, they have resolved to take quite a novel way of appealing not only to their employers but to the general public as well. We are given to believe the scheme of the agitators will be put in operation this night, and that its effects will be the most astonishing ever

experienced at a time of peace in any great modern city. About this design peculiar secrecy is observed. Should we be able to obtain any further information, it will appear in our later editions.

With a complacent smile Michael Grame puts down the paper and begins his dinner. The hour of his triumph and his fame is nigh at hand. He feels his blood swell in his veins. His heart beats lightly, the lamp of his imagination blazes up in the garden of his dreams, and he sees visions of his own triumphal progress, and hears echoes of shouts of acclaim.

The chop and the pint of stout are gone. Such an evening as this deserves a deeper honouring ; it is now half-past six. A deeper honouring, yes. "Waiter, a pint of pale sherry and a cigar ; a later edition of the *Globe*, if it is out."

"Yes, sir, here's the *Globe*. Half-crown sherry, yes, sir. 'Further particulars.'"


The waiter puts down the sherry and goes away. Michael Grame's hand trembles with excitement as he pours out a glass of the wine and

raises it to his lips before looking at the paper. Usually he is a water-drinker—the stout has made him feel warm and comfortable. The biting heat of the sherry diffuses a quick thrill of delight through his frame. He swallows the contents of the glass and then takes up the paper.

His eyes light on two words, and everything else on the sheet is nothing. The two words are, "Michael Grame."

This is the crowning moment of his life. He feels the bays of fame upon his forehead. All London is talking of him now; all the world shall talk of him by-and-by. And all London shall not only talk of him, but shall talk well of him—shall rend the clouds with his name. Oh, consummation of all his hopes, supreme deliverance of the conception of a lifetime! Oh gladness of a holy triumph!

He drinks another glass of the sherry before reading the new paragraph. The latest intelligence in the *Globe* is contained in a few words, but the words are full of grave significance :



We have gathered a little additional news of the coming protest. So far as we are able to judge, the demonstration will take more the form of a *coup* than we first indicated. Mr. Michael Grame, Secretary of the Independent Metropolitan Engine - Drivers' Association, has organised the scheme. The police are already adopting precautions.

"The Police!" mutters Michael Grame, in bland condescension; "the police! They are about as powerful against my plan as the smoke of this cigar against a whirlwind."

He drinks the sherry quickly. His face is now becoming flushed and his eye excited; red lines frame the scar upon his cheek, the centre of the scar grows deadly white. At ordinary times the blackened glass covering the cavity under the eyebrow looks dark and cold, now it catches and reflects the glowing hues beneath and around it, and shines like iron at a dull-red heat.

Michael Grame sits drinking the unaccustomed sherry and smoking unaccustomed cigars until half-past seven. When he rises to go he feels a slight sense of dissatisfaction with himself for having tarried so long, and added the sherry to


the stout. No doubt he required the stout to strengthen him and take the ragged edges off his nerves so that they might not jar at every contact, but now he experiences a dissatisfying suspicion that he has been guilty of an excess, an excess too in the supreme passage of his life, and when any moment may bring him grave news of his wife.

But when he reaches the keen exterior air, and feels it cool and freshen him, he loses all sense of uneasiness, and walks swiftly and eagerly back to the office in Farringdon Street, there to await the maturing of his great plan, and to see and talk to such men as may seek him for instruction or counsel.

A number of men are in his office ; many have grave earnest faces, many, like himself, are a little flushed and excited.

At half-past eleven most of the men have left. Some have departed to their allotted posts, some to their homes, several into the streets to see the effect of the titanic blow.

At half-past eleven on this same night, Mrs



Ilford sends in all haste a messenger into town for Michael Grame. There is no unexpected alarm at the house in Shakespeare Road, but the long-anticipated event is at hand, and it is most desirable that the master of the house should be at home. The messenger is the little maid-of-all-work, and she goes with speed to the Brixton Station, and there takes the train to Ludgate Hill. It is close upon midnight before she reaches Farringdon Street. She passes under the Viaduct on her way to the office, where Michael Grame now sits all by himself.

At two minutes past twelve Michael Grame stands up and lights four candles that stand on the writing-table. Then he sits down in his elbow-chair smoking a cigar and staring into the gas-lamp on the table.

At five minutes past twelve the flame of the gas changes from pale yellow to faint blue. Soon the flames grow shorter and thinner. He smiles at it a smile of comprehension and satisfaction.

In three minutes more the flame flickers, jumps, flickers, and—goes out !

With a wild shout of triumph he springs to his feet and rushes to the window. His gait is not quite steady. He must have been drinking since he left Fleet Street. He catches hold of the sash, steadies himself, draws up the blind, and looks out.


All over London at this moment has fallen a sudden pall of darkness. Not a gas-jet burns in chamber or street. The gas-stokers all over London have struck, and at the same instant turned off the gas !

At this moment, pale and trembling with terror, the little maid-messenger from Shakespeare Road opens the door of Michael Grame's office and enters the room. Seeing no one in the room but him, she is a little reassured ; she hastens to him and puts her hand on his shoulder. He turns round, swaying unsteadily to and fro, recognises her, and seizing her by the shoulder, calls out in a hoarse thick voice :

“Do you see that black darkness?—I made it! Do you remark that silence?—that is mine too. But these are only parts of my work. That darkness and that silence are designed by me to compel justice, to make the driver of white slaves feel the power of the slaves, and to show those who use the handiwork of white slaves that the slaves have power over their own handiwork, that they can withhold their own handiwork if they choose!”

The girl looks into the dense darkness in terror, then at him in fear. That darkness is no more to her than the hideous cavern of night, through which she has to regain her home, miles out among ghostly houses; this man is to her only her mistress's husband, who has been drinking, and who is saying wild things, and for whom she has been sent in hot haste. Her throat is dry and her lips feel thick with dread, but she contrives to whisper:

“Master, missus is bad, and missus's sister says, sir, would you please come home at once.”



He passes one hand across his flushed forehead, and with the other steadies himself by the window-frame. Then looking heavily at the girl he says :

“My wife is bad! Now, what do you mean by saying my wife is bad? Is it only what we have been expecting?”

“That’s all, sir; but will you please to come at once: missus is bad—and—and—and I am frightened to go by myself.” Here the girl covers her face with her hands and bursts into sobs.

There is something in the coincidence of this news coming at this time which arouses a strange conflict in Michael Grame’s heart. Here he is to-night in the City, surrounded by the accumulated triumph of a lifetime. There, beyond the river, far away through the thick darkness of his own creation, the hope of years is about to be fulfilled; all that can be done for the cause is now effected, as far as his part is concerned. There is nothing more for him to do in town to-night. He would like to stay and watch the progress of his victory—but his wife? For

a few moments he is plunged in a torrent of conflicting thoughts. Then he shakes himself, drops one hand from his forehead and the other from the window-frame, and says to the girl :

“Come, Em'ly, I will go at once with you. We are yet in time to catch the twelve-twenty-four from Ludgate.” Although his purpose is clear to him, his memory of recent things is almost wholly obscured.

Seizing the girl by the arm, partly to steady himself and partly to guide her through the deep darkness of the way, Michael Grame hastens down Farringdon Street in the direction of Ludgate Hill railway-station.

The girl is too much terrified to notice anything but the hideous darkness and the appalling silence. He has now only the one thought in his head—to get home, and to get home quickly. Some terror of the enormity of his own act has stolen in upon him at last.

They reach Ludgate Hill railway-station and

ter it. He goes to the ticket-box. Shut!
What's the matter? A porter answers:


"The strike. All the drivers struck at twelve."

"So they did," mutters Michael Grame. "So they did. It was part of my scheme, of course; but my head is confused. I have been working too hard. I've had too much mental strain of late. Of course they have struck."

"Oh master, what shall we do? and missus bad, and all the lights of London out, and all the trains stopped!"

"Hush, Em'ly, hush, my good girl. I'll make it all right. I'll call a cab. We shall go home by a cab." He then goes out of the station into the station-yard. No cab! They pass into the roadway. He puts his hand to his mouth trumpet-wise and shouts: "Hansom—four-wheeler." There is not a soul in view, not a foot-fall in his ears. "My God!" he cries; "I have forgotten—the cabs have struck too!"

"Oh master, what will become of us? Can't we take the 'bus or tram?"



"Girl, they have all struck—all the men that drive for hire in London. Come, there is nothing for it but to walk."

"Oh, we shall never get home," cries the girl, "and missus will be dead of fright. Couldn't you send a message to her, sir? Couldn't you send a telegram? We can't be home for better than an hour. She'll be dead with fright."

He pauses to think a moment; puts his hand to his head again, and tries to think. At length he whispers into the girl's ear: "No, I can't telegraph; I'm not sure that the Camberwell office is open so late. Anyway, there is no one in any telegraph office in London now. They, like the engine-drivers and cab-drivers, are all gone too. Come, let us walk."

The girl moans and clings to him, and they walk on towards Blackfriars Bridge. He is unsteady, and she is weak from terror; as they enter upon the bridge she feels that it will take them hours to get home. She is afraid to leave him, and yet, in her faithful pity for the wife of

the man, she would risk anything to send news of him to her.

"Master, couldn't we get someone to run on and say we are safe? It would be so good for missus to know; then we could take our time and go home at our ease."

He has forgotten his own precaution about the candles. He sees something in what she says. But where are they to get a messenger? The place is quite deserted. They are now about halfway over the bridge. He hears men talking across the way. He cannot see anyone, but he hears the voices. He tells her to wait where she is, and he will try to get a messenger among the men over the way.

He crosses, and finds three men in one of the recesses. They are close together.

"Will one of you run out to my place in Shakespeare Road, Herne Hill, as fast as you can, with a message?"

"How much will you give?" asks a gruff harsh voice.

"Half-a-crown."

"Not good enough: we're on strike too, ain't we, pals?" This is evidently regarded as a fine stroke of wit, for all laugh loudly. That laugh tears harshly through the mortal stillness of the hour. There is no sound of vehicle, or of steam-engine, or of footsteps; nothing disturbs the muffling pall of silence but the lapping of the river on the Surrey shore, the faint weird whispers the water makes around the piers of the bridge, and this odious laugh of these three unseen men.

"Well, half-a-sovereign if you do it in three-quarters of an hour," answers Michael Grame, who, considering all he has done for men, thinks it hard that he should be obliged to haggle with these as to price.

"Show us the time and your money," says the biggest of the three men. Michael Grame can now see the outline of the upper portions of the figures of the three men against the sky.

"Here are wax matches," says Michael Grame, "strike one."

One of the men, not the tallest, strikes a match, and, shading, it in his hat, holds it inside the parapet. Michael Grame pulls the bag out of his trousers pocket, opens it, pours the gold into his hand, and, having selected half-a-sovereign, returns the rest of the gold to the bag, and then the bag to his pocket. Holding up the half-sovereign between his finger and thumb in the light of the match he says : " Will that satisfy you ? Now I'll show you the time."

" Thank you," says the tallest of the three men, taking the half-sovereign ; " this will do on account ; but we'll find the time ourselves. We're on strike too"—the match is out—" that's a specimen of our strike." Michael Grame reels beneath a blow, and suffocates under the pressure of an arm drawn violently around his neck. He feels a tug at his watch-chain and a tear at the pocket where he has put the gold ; then he becomes unconscious.

" He ain't dead ?"

" No."

"What'll we do with him?"

"Shy him over. He don't deserve to live. Took us for honest working-men, damned if he didn't! Shy him over, I say. He took us for honest working-men, so I say he don't deserve to live, and shy him over."

"Give him one chance—shy him clear of the bridge."

"Well, I'm agreeable. One chance. Shy him clear. One, two, three—now!"

Splash-sh-sh.

"Oh master! Oh master!"

"There's a woman over there. Let's run."

Next day, Saturday, *The Evening Standard* had the longest and best accounts of the events of the previous eighteen hours. The following is a condensation of the newspaper description:

Obedient to a secret plan of long standing, at midnight yesterday the greatest strike London has ever known commenced. Beyond some vague hints in a contemporary, the public knew nothing of the impending calamity until the gas of all the city suddenly went out at a few minutes

past twelve o'clock. Alarmed by this terrible event, people rushed from their houses to learn the cause and seek an explanation. They were met by news which may fairly be said to have paralysed the stoutest hearts. The facts were briefly these : An arrangement had been come to between the Independent Metropolitan Engine Drivers' Association, the London Gas Stokers' Society, the Universal London Horse Drivers' Association, the Postal Telegraph Hand-in-Hand Amalgamation, the River Craft Union, and the Wapping Institute for the Protection of Seafaring Men, that each and all of these would, at twelve o'clock midnight on the 2nd of November, strike without making any previous notification of their resolution to their employers. At the time appointed this fearful conception was carried into effect. It was the intention of the working-men or rather a small section of their leaders carried away by the eloquence and persuasion of one man, to aim forcibly by this means at their employers, and at the same to place before the general public in a most powerful way the importance of the working-man. The result was that from midnight last night until this hour of writing, 2 P.M., London has been almost wholly deprived of artificial light, of the means of communication with any other portions of the empire or the Continent, and of all internal vehicular locomotion.

It is but just to the working-men to say that, notwithstanding their awful responsibility in producing such a terrible situation, they have in no way added to the confusion arising from their criminal rashness. But no sooner did the state of things become generally known last night, than Rapine awoke and shook itself, and stalked forth into the dark deserted ways, and did such deeds as will make the readers of later generations shudder. Howls and shrieks

and yells and cursings and piteous prayers broke the quiet hours. Men and women thought that the Day of Judgment was at hand, and the wrath of Heaven had been let loose; then they fell upon their knees in prayer. Later on, discovering it was only the vices of man that had been unshackled, they abandoned their prayers, arose from their knees, and gave up all thought of finding mercy, and surrendered themselves to despair.

Elsewhere we give a catalogue of some of the awful deeds hidden beneath the darkness of last night and revealed by the light of to-day. For a considerable time to come we must expect additional disclosures; but many of the deeds, many of the foulest and most undreamable, will never be made public. They have been swallowed up in the Maelström of that night's saturnalia of crime.

It was, we understand, the intention of the men who struck to hold out for a week, but already they stand appalled and humbled under the shadow of their awful deed. We have it upon excellent authority that at four o'clock this afternoon all the men will once more return to work and relieve the city from its enforced separation from the rest of civilisation, and deliver it from the tyranny of the prodigious monster made absolute king of London when the light went out.

In a later edition *The Standard* published this, under date 5 P.M.:

All the men have returned to work. The wires are once more busy. The siege of London from within is at an end.

The blockade is raised. No such *Te Deum* ever arose to Heaven as will ascend from this city to-night when it kneels to pray in the white-curtained nurseries of its unpolluted homes.

"Who is that?"

"It is I, Michael."

"Is that Jane Ilford?"

"Yes. I am come to take you home, Michael. The doctor says you are strong enough to go now, and I have a cab waiting for you."

"How are Helen, and—our daughter?"

"Well. They are both going on nicely. Helen was sitting up as I came for you."

"Take my hand and lead me. You know you must lead me now."

She takes her brother-in-law by the hand, draws his arm within hers, leads him down the long passage between the beds, down the stairs, and out through the hall to the open air. A cab stands waiting for them at the hospital-door. It is the afternoon of Saturday, the 10th of November.

They drive quietly through the busy streets to Shakespeare Road. Although he is discharged from the hospital, he is still very feeble. The injuries he received on the bridge, the terrible shock sustained by him when he was flung over, and his long immersion before he was picked up by the passing coal-barge, all have shattered and weakened him. He wears no spectacles now.


At last they arrive, and he is led by his sister-in-law into the room where his wife lies. She is propped up to receive him. Across her lap rests their child, a week old.

The wife puts her arms round the husband's neck and kisses him, and smiles, and says after a little pause: "Won't you kiss our daughter?"

He raises himself and says: "Place her in my arms."

"Take her." The mother lifts up the infant.

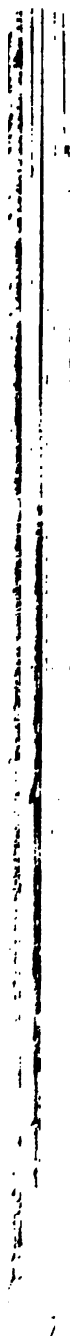
"Place her in my arms, Helen. Men ill-used me on the bridge that night, and now this one has gone too"—he touches his left eye with his hand.



"She was born, sir, in the middle of the Great Dark," says the nurse, laying the sleeping infant across the blind father's arms.

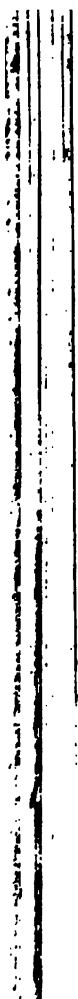
He stoops and kisses the child, then hands the child back to the mother, saying sadly: "She was born in the middle of the Great Dark that I made, thinking brighter light would come out of that darkness for those I loved. She was born upon the beginning of this Great Dark that was made for me when the lights were out. Almighty Maker of the darkness and the light forgive me, and let me have light to see her, and all of these—in the Hereafter!"






A WHITE HAND





A WHITE HAND.


PERHAPS the last man in all England likely to pay any attention to superstitious notions or fears was Edmund Crayford, who, with his wife Agnes and daughter Emily, lived at Hervey's Dingle, in Warwickshire. When he was fifty, his only child thirteen, and his wife forty, he bought Hervey's Dingle, a queer, dingy, low, rambling house, at the bottom of a narrow glen which opened on a wooded plain. With the house went five hundred acres of fertile tillage and pasturage, and Edmund Crayford took to working this farm for his own amusement. His means were ample. He owned fields in Norfolk and Kent, had money in the



Funds, and yearly drew a handsome income out of a sugar plantation in the West Indies.

Hervey's Dingle got its evil air from a deplorable accident which had occurred there five years before Edmund Crayford had entered into possession. The former proprietor had gone out early shooting rabbits: they were too numerous about the place, and gave much trouble. The great burrow ate into the face of the eastern slope of the glen. The man, carrying his gun across his body, ascended the slope and approached the top of the hill. Suddenly a rabbit appeared between him and the sky. He raised his gun hastily and fired. The rabbit ran away uninjured. The man heard the groan of a human being; the figure of a lad staggered over the top of the ridge. The man saw the face and the blood on the face, threw down his gun, and ran to the brow of the hill. The lad had fallen, face down. "Good God, George! My son George!" cried the father, as he knelt beside the dying youth.

The head and neck of the lad were pierced, and



he was almost suffocated with the blood ; but he raised himself on his elbow, and said, thinking nothing of himself and all of those who would remain after he had gone : "'Twas the cursed rabbits. Kiss my hand, father. You won't like the Dingle any more. Sell it. Take mother and the girls away. I owe ten pounds to William Scott——"

" And your death to me, my boy, my child ! "

" And my life and all else—to you, my father. Good-bye. Ugh ! I thought 'twas daylight ; but I've hurt my head. Good-night, papa."

For nearly five years after this Hervey Dingle House lay idle, and fell into bad repair and worse repute. A tenant had been got for the land, but until Edmund Crayford took the farm and the house no one had slept in the latter since the family of the boy who was shot left it after his funeral.

When Edmund Crayford took the Dingle farm and house he knew all about the fate of the last owner's son. Crayford did not lack humane


sentiments, but he was neither imaginative nor sentimental. He regarded the fatal accident simply as a fatal and deplorable accident, but looked upon it as no more influencing the place where the unlucky shot had been fired than if it had occurred on the Pacific Ocean or the plains of Central Africa. He had told the story to his wife, accompanying his statement of facts with a running commentary of ridicule upon the local superstition. He was a man of strong will and powerful individuality. The idea that his wife might see things otherwise than as they presented themselves to him never crossed his mind. He had been the lawgiver to her for many years, and she the meek submissive vessel for all his thoughts. She never dreamed of questioning his wisdom or his will, and although she could not pass the scene of the calamity without an uneasy shudder, she hid her repugnance from him, and as time went on learned to familiarise her mind with daily dwelling in contact with this story.

Now Edmund Crayford was sixty years of



age, tall, rubicund, straight as an arrow, but failing a little in his lower limbs. He was taciturn and somewhat stern, but not wanting in a rugged kind of tenderness to the woman who had given her best years to him, and full of what he regarded as a dangerously proud love of Emily, his dark, pale, quiet-mannered daughter, still unmarried and now three-and-twenty years of age.


Before Mrs. Crayford had married Edmund Crayford she had surrendered to him not only her heart, but her whole intellect as well. As the years of their married life rolled away she gradually grew more and more submissive. Now, when she was no longer young and he was growing old, she leaned still more implicitly upon him. Twenty-five years ago she had been jealous of his love, for she loved him and him only, though she had had other lovers; now she was jealous of his regard, for in him was wound up the whole history of her love, the one love of her life, and when he was gone life would be a blank until the grave. She was not above the middle



height of women, pale, soft in her ways, and timorously sympathetic.

Emily had the tall form of her father and the quiet manners of her mother. Her eyes were shy hazel-gray, with now and then a quick gleam of something which seemed only to want fanning to develop into fire. Her forehead was broad and smooth, her nostrils delicate and very refined, and her hands long, slender, languid, and pleading in their motion. She chose serious colours in her dress, and wore her dark-brown hair drawn severely close across her forehead and held back with a high comb, which, looking like a coronet, gave her head a half-Greek half-regal outline, well suited to her regular still features.

She had lived a lonely life at the Dingle: not that she felt or knew it was lonely; she had had no experience of anything more varied or exciting since she had come to live here. Her father was completely absorbed in country pursuits. He took a deep interest in farming and stock, would go a hundred miles to see



a good specimen of a pet breed of cow or sheep; hunted and shot, and went to hunting-dinners and presided at farmers' clubs; was a Freemason and went to lodge, but never came to town, and rarely was present at any ball or party; indeed he felt impatient of women's company, and avoided their society as much as possible. Thus it fell out that for one in her position there were few girls in Warwickshire who saw less of her own sex than Emily Crayford, only child and heiress of Edmund Crayford, of Hervey's Dingle, near Leamington.

But if Mr. Crayford went little into society, he now and then opened his doors to his friends, and in the hunting and shooting seasons Dingle House was not often a week without a guest. Mr. Crayford did not get on well with his wife's people; his wife had grown to care even less for society than her husband, and the result was that few people stayed at the Dingle, save his own male friends, who were chiefly of about his own standing in years.

Among those who occasionally occupied a guest's room at the Dingle was Sir Luke Standish Russell, a poor Hampshire baronet. The ancestors of the baronet had fought in two crusades, and figured in many a bloody field within the rocky shores of their own island home; but having been unlucky in their political alliances, their house had never prospered greatly, and they had fallen in for little crown grants of royal lands or fat abbey pasturages. Hence Sir Luke found himself with possessions little greater than the Hervey Dingle farm, and of a rent-roll lacking considerably of two thousand a-year. But Fortune had been liberal in another mood, and to the owner of the tumbledown castle inherited by generations of his race had given a large and healthy family, which, he was wont to boast, drawing some consolation from the coincidence, corresponded almost exactly in age and sex with the group of princes and princesses who owe first allegiance of blood to the person of the august lady ruling over this loyal empire. His eldest son was in a mere

marching regiment, with a beggarly allowance of two hundred a-year ; the second had graduated in the diplomatic service, and accepted a consulship somewhere in South America ; and the third, James, born 1850, having displayed in youth a taste for theatrical representations, now lived in London on an allowance of one-hundred-and-twenty pounds per annum, and the hope, weekly deferred, of having one of his numerous Society comedies accepted by a West-End house, or failing this, getting a melodrama played at the Wessex across the water.

END OF VOL. II.





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